

Eckhart Tolle Retreat Titled Allowing Presence to Arise

[Speaker 2] (0:08 - 0:22)

Two experiences I've had in the last few days are sleepiness and almost hypnotic visual sense and I was just wondering if you could comment on that.

[Speaker 1] (0:22 - 0:25)

What do you mean by hypnotic visual sense?

[Speaker 2] (0:26 - 0:39)

Just the quality of the light in the room changes and the depth perception and the closest thing that I'm familiar with to it is an almost hypnotic meditative state.

[Speaker 1] (0:39 - 15:04)

Yes, thank you. The arising presence sometimes can affect the ways in which you perceive things you might see because there's greater aliveness in your sense perceptions, they may change for a while. Some people report almost something as if they had taken acid, almost certain visual changes.

Those just accompany the inner transformation, the presence, but the sleepiness is one of the ways in which the ego protects itself against presence. And that is not uncommon for suddenly to feel a wave of sleepiness or people start yawning several times and they slept, perhaps slept well the previous night and they sit in a meeting and suddenly they go, hmm, hmm, hmm. The ego is saying, I don't want to listen to this, I'm going somewhere else.

That's one way in which also the pain body, they're intrinsically connected, doesn't like listening to this. The pain body is a little entity there. It doesn't like listening to this, it feels, oh, they're talking about me.

And even worse, they're looking at me. It doesn't want the light of consciousness on it because it needs the darkness of unconsciousness to thrive. So it doesn't, and when it does that, then it has certain strategies, certain ways and means of obscuring presence, of taking you away.

One is the sleepiness that can overcome you. Another one is, that's more rare but it has happened, pain body suddenly rises up very strongly, very quickly before it can be observed and takes over the mind. And suddenly, before there was a peaceful looking person sitting, suddenly there's an angry entity because the pain body is getting very angry.

In one meeting we had, there was intense sense of presence throughout the room. I was

talking in the way I talk and suddenly from the back of the room somebody said, when are we going to start meditating? Of course the pain body didn't really want to meditate, it just wanted to get away from presence and say, okay, let's meditate, that's better, that's not threatened, let's go through some technique, at least that's not threatening.

But it probably didn't even want that, it just wanted to be unhappy about something and interrupt, just don't be here. And then I suggested that person should go out for a while, sometimes it works if you go out for a while, after a few minutes come back. And that person I saw went out, came back after a few minutes and then went back out again.

I haven't seen her since. But even in her, the presence must have arisen so the process has started. It's being obscured.

The process will continue one way or another. That's the beauty of it. And I've had, when I used to see individual people, I have encountered one or two very interesting pain bodies.

And quite often witnessed a transformation of somebody sitting there and suddenly looking into the eyes of the pain body. And the pain body demanding an emotional reaction. And trying all it can because that's what it needs.

And it demands an emotion, an emotional reaction from you. And then gets frustrated when it doesn't get it. There's simply a presence.

And then the frustration becomes too much. This particular pain body I'm just thinking of then ran out of the room, down the stairs. And I thought, I might never see this person again.

And ten minutes later he came back and said, I'm okay now. And after that session, because sometimes when I write things down after I see people or I see things that I didn't know before. I then had the expression, a pain body attack.

And then of course there's also such a thing as a mind attack. Very often they go together. So another way for the pain body to obscure presence or to take you away from sitting in that energy field, the collective field that we have here.

Feeling threatened by it. But not being able in many cases to come up because the presence is too intense. It doesn't want to come up into the light of presence.

Only a very few pain bodies have enough courage or strength to come up. So it doesn't come up, it wasn't to come up into the light of presence. So it cannot manifest as emotion.

When it cannot manifest as emotion, it can manifest as a physical symptom, as a physical pain. So some people have told me that as they sit here, suddenly there's a

sharp pain here or some other symptom there. I can't sit anymore.

And then when they put some attention on it, some have told me, suddenly it shifts to another part of the body. It doesn't want to be looked at. So it can turn into...

Another way the pain body can exact revenge is by arising after this beautiful field of presence. Sitting in this beautiful field of presence and more and more presence arising in you. The pain body temporarily, so to speak, goes into a corner and says, Okay, I'll wait in this little corner.

And then when you go away, either a few hours later or a few days later, suddenly the pain body comes out of the little corner, the dark corner, and manifests very strongly. Almost to compensate for presence. I'm still strong enough to obscure presence, and I'll show you how strong I am.

Quite a few people have told me of pain body attacks after a gathering, one or two days after. At last I'm drinking some of this water. It's fascinating to watch.

So those are the main symptoms of pain body obscuring, attempting to obscure presence. Another one is suddenly a memory comes of a painful event. And there's emotion associated with that memory.

And immediately the mind starts working on it or with it. And you're off in some event that happened ten years ago. And that was dreadful.

And you wouldn't be in such a state if that hadn't happened. You wouldn't need to sit here if that hadn't happened. And so it takes you off into dwelling on painful memory.

And you're reliving the emotion. And you're not here anymore. Once you know it may happen, it's fine.

You watch it, even if it obscures presence temporarily. Then suddenly presence is back. And then you watch the pain body in motion.

Allowing remains the key. Not fighting anything, any manifestation of it. Not fighting if it's a physical pain, not fighting that, allowing that.

Even if it's tiredness, it's okay. You allow that. Restlessness, that's another one.

And you can't sit still anymore. Sometimes when people sit, I can see one person's leg suddenly starts going. They sit like this and go.

Then I know they're not here, not in the body. But there is an emotion going and it's restless. It doesn't really want to be here.

Or they go like that. And again, it's something to watch. Even very, very common things

are minor manifestations of that.

For example, tapping you. Like going like this on the surface somewhere on your knee. It often is a beginning pain body.

They say, okay, I'm still patient. But not much longer. Interesting when with greater presence, there comes also greater observing what the body is doing.

The body may be reflecting pain body in one way or another. Or you feel a sudden great tightness somewhere or contraction holding in. You sometimes find it even with meditators.

They're very good at sitting still for five hours. But it's like putting a lid on a boiling kettle. Leave me alone, I'm meditating.

I'm not to be disturbed. Or even better. In Buddhism they have a meta meditation.

Meditation on loving kindness. Which is beautiful, but you spread loving kindness. It starts from yourself and then out into the universe.

And then a little daughter comes in. Leave me alone, can't you see I'm doing my meta meditation? And there's the spaciousness again.

It's always there. Even when words are being used. There it is underneath the words.

Okay, the mic is coming here to the front row.

[Speaker 4] (15:06 - 15:50)

Thank you. In various scriptures, Christ included, there's a reference to the devil and hell. And I guess even in the Hindus, there's quite a bit of the same stuff going on.

And I was reading your biography, not your biography, the interview last night that John had. And he had mentioned that when you read scriptures, when you come from the sense of presence in reading them, you get a feeling what was true and what was interpreted by someone else. And just your feeling on, because so much has been said on sin and hell.

It sounds like the pain body sounds like Satan. Yes, yes. So it just gives you a feeling on that.

[Speaker 1] (15:50 - 26:42)

Thank you. You'll be amazed if you reread the New Testament, the four Gospels, how often Jesus is reported to be driving out demons. It's almost as if every other person he meets has a demon inside.

On every page, almost, he travels to another village and he drives out more demons out of people. And so at first I didn't know that demonic possession was that common. What they were talking about is simply the pain bodies, different concepts, different words.

It is true that certain heavy pain bodies attract certain entities, disembodied fields, energy fields, because everything is energy field. The physical body is an energy field. Even a thought is an energy field.

So all kinds of energy fields. And a very heavy pain body can attract an energy field that corresponds to its frequency. Similar pain.

Just a field of pain. There's nothing spooky about it. It attaches itself to the pain body and that makes it even bigger.

But any kind of pain body, one could say, is a form of possession. And again, it's not spooky. It's just there's something there.

And Jesus was simply bringing intense presence in which pain bodies found it very hard to survive. So that's all driving out pain. We have a different word for it now.

Hell. Well, that's what the ego creates for itself. Many people already live in hell in this lifetime, self-created hell.

Human history is to a large extent self-created hell. The history of the 20th century, a lot of it could come out of Dante's Inferno. And that was very recent.

It's human-created. Ego-created. Identification with form.

Collective forms. Individual forms. Needing enemies.

Needing the separation. The conflict. Thriving on war.

On conflict. Deriving an enhanced identity through having enemies. Us.

We. Them. So those egoic structures create hell, whether it's hell here or hell in some disembodied form.

And any identification with form takes you into illusion and ultimately into hell and what one could call evil. It's identification with form. So you go away from the source into form identity.

And then there's the clash with other forms or the wanting to eliminate other forms, the form wanting to be bigger, more stronger in its sense of self. So really it all comes back to ego. Ego creates its own hell until it self-destructs.

That's the good thing. Ultimately, the hell it creates self-destructs. One creation on a collective level, on a collective scale, to see the self-destruction of ego, just to see how it

plays itself out.

When you saw the rise of national socialism in Germany, the Second World War, on a collective level, a huge collective ego developed like an illness, very heavy, and then there's the collective heavy pain body cooperating with the heavy ego structures. As you know, countries have their own pain bodies. Some countries have much heavier collective pain bodies than others, countries where there has been a lot of strife and pain.

And so those countries have a heaviness that anybody who is sensitive can notice the moment you step off the plane. Russia, for example, also very heavy. Germany is very heavy.

So that heavy collective pain body awoke and the egoic structures developed of the collective ego, us, creating hell for themselves and others, finally succeeding in making everybody, North, South, East, and West, into an enemy. You remember I talked about the ego's need for enemies in one form or another. For personal ego, the enemy may be a situation I'm in.

I don't like this. This moment I don't like. When the next one comes, I don't like this one either.

So the need for enemies, and there you can think of a whole country in the grip of pain body and collective ego, needing to make every other country surrounding it into an enemy. And in that feeling, an enormously enhanced sense of self, total fiction, but enormously strong. Us against them.

We are right and they are all wrong. And then creating hell. And such hell that finally there comes an auto-destruction and the whole country went up in flames and almost nothing left of the cities.

Everything crumbles. The ego, that particular aspect of collective ego, self-destructed. So that's the, in that madness, there's fortunately something, a little time bomb concealed.

And that also works on a personal level. People who build up very strong egos associated with strong pain bodies, eventually create havoc in their own lives. And this self-destructs.

So it's wonderful, ultimately. So there's hell, and then there's the end of hell. We're coming to the end of hell.

It's been hell to a large extent for quite a long time. Temptation? Yes.

Yes, temptation is the ego not yet totally gone. The ego is still there and says, you can

be very special. I'm paraphrasing the temptation that Jesus had into modern, the language that I use.

The ego saying, you can be very special. You can be the most special of all people. That is the great temptation of a spiritual teacher.

The ego coming back. It's already disappeared. Maybe a tiny bit left.

Can't even see it anymore. And suddenly, that specialness, that sense of me, I'm special, because there's such a presence and everybody's telling me I'm special, so I must be special. A return of form identity, a return of a me, a return of an image of who I am, a self image.

That is the temptation. Also beautifully expressed, I don't know whether in Buddhism there's any scripture like that or whether the director of that film just did it. There was a film called Little Buddha and it shows the life story of the Buddha, according to the legend.

And just before the enlightenment happens under the tree, first there come all these armies, they're symbols for attacks, ego attacks, arrows. And then they're all gone because he doesn't react. He doesn't react to the attacks by these vast armies, which are symbolic.

And he just allows. And then he sits and there's a moment of stillness. And then he looks into a pool of water that happens to be next to him.

And he sees reflected in it his own image, his own face. And as he looks, suddenly an arm reaches out of the pool, tries to pull him in. And he frees himself and then the image disappears.

And that, of course, is the symbol of that reflection, the reflective sense of me is the last attempt of the ego to regain power. Because ego is a self-image of me. And that was still there even at the last moment.

Me. And then it dissolved. So these are the temptations.

And so spiritual teachers have that also. The return, I would call it the return of specialness. And I've seen it a few times.

It's definitely there. The moment a statement comes that I am the one, but not you. Or at least you're not going to make it in this lifetime.

Okay, the mic is coming.

[Speaker 2] (26:50 - 27:23)

Thank you for being here. One of the most amazing experiences I've had of presence was watching wild animals in a game reserve. They were cheetahs and we happened to be very close to them.

They just had an incredible sense of presence which I'd never experienced before until I came here. There doesn't seem to be any ego, there didn't seem to be any pain body around at all.

[Speaker 3] (27:24 - 27:25)

I'd like to hear your views on that, please.

[Speaker 1] (27:26 - 35:34)

Thank you, thank you very much. And that's indeed true. I already talked about, mainly with reference to the vegetation, when I talked about nature today or yesterday, that nature becomes a teacher or teaching.

It becomes extremely helpful in entering that state of clarity that is presence. Now, animals, of course, an important aspect of that. They also live in alignment with now.

They have not yet fallen away from the source as much as humans have. They are closer to the source than humans still. In that sense, one could say that everything in nature is still closer to God than humans.

That's one way of putting it. But humans have gone out from the source a long way and they are lost, homeless, wandering about. Everything in nature is still at home in the now.

I used that expression this morning, to be at home in the now. Everything in nature is completely in that restful state of rootedness in being. It's rooted in being, in itself.

It is itself. It has integrity, which is an abstract word, but translated, really means one with itself. The split hasn't come in that is originated through self-reflective consciousness, an image forming of here I am.

That's me. That image formation that is fueled by thought, created by thought, fueled by thought, perpetuated by thought. And that with animals is not there yet.

They are pre-mind. Consciousness, yes, a beautiful expression of consciousness. So, simply to watch an animal can be a wonderful way of entering the state of thoughtless awareness.

Because by watching without labeling, without interpreting, not watching through accumulated knowledge that you may have about that animal, but watching, true watching, like true listening, is from a place of not knowing. True watching is not as,

okay, that's what's calling it this, that, or that. It's in that state of awareness, clarity, you watch.

And there the cat, whatever it is, moves, stops, looks, moves on, stops, stops, lies down, eyes are closed, but it still knows what's going on. And the slightest movement and it goes. And just many artists have painted resting cats, that even the form is so perfect, how they curl up, or lie, however they lie, sometimes completely aligned with the form on which they lie.

Birds, just that spontaneous, that oneness. Watching, the secret lies in watching without interpreting in any way, or even wanting a reaction from the animal, which is what the mind wants. Unless the animal comes, you can invite the cat, or it is a cat, to come, but just be there.

If it wants to come, it'll come. If you know cats, you know that whatever you want them to do, they want to. So it can just be there.

And they may come, may not come, it doesn't matter. Any animal, particularly wild animals, even there's a wonderful dog living here, that's a teaching also, just watching a dog. The goodness that is in a dog, the unconditional acceptance, the readiness to be in joy any moment.

At the slightest excuse, the tail goes. Aliveness, joy, yes, life is good. Even dogs who live with people who are burdened by pain bodies and egoic, problem making minds, still, most of them, still manage to be sane.

It's amazing that the dogs remain sane, living in that environment. They live with a person who's, oh, it's so dreadful. And the dog is still, even that person looks at his dog and he goes, alive, life is good now.

So it's just beautiful. Any animal, watching it without labeling, without wanting anything from it. It's a beautiful meditation and presence arises with ease because mind, there's no mind there.

Now if you watch a human, not so easy to sustain presence because in most humans, there's a lot of mind. You're watching a busy mind. So you experience presence when you are watching that and then again here.

And once presence is established, then it doesn't matter anymore. You could watch an old truck and be present. Not really so elegant.

No. I will come to the written questions probably tomorrow. Everybody will receive an answer.

One or two people wanted to be anonymous and they will also receive an answer.

[Speaker 4] (35:41 - 36:25)

Oh, yeah. This question might be dumb, but I need to ask you. I have been in therapy many times and most of the therapists suggest you to get your self-esteem, to look at yourself in the mirror in the morning, look at yourself, kiss yourself, tell to yourself how beautiful and wonderful you are.

So, what do you think about mirrors? How should I approach it now that I cannot kiss myself any longer? Do you watch yourself in the mirror?

What do you think? What do you see?

[Speaker 1] (36:27 - 59:19)

Thank you. Good question. Of course, many egos are trapped in predominantly negative stories of me, that how dreadful I am and I'm no good and I can't.

And then there comes a point when you are just aware of that particular kind of conditioning. There is an arising presence when you become aware of how heavily negative your mind is conditioned. There is some presence.

And then, from there, there is a little bit of freedom where you could say, okay, I can let go of those thoughts and replace them with better thoughts, more positive thoughts. To some extent, that works. It still moves within the realm of image, so you have a better, a more comfortable egoic image after a while.

When you have had enough little notices on your bathroom mirrors to remind you that you are fine and you are good enough and so on, then after a while you live with an egoic sense of self that is a little bit easier to live with. But every egoic sense of self is trapped in the polarities of good and bad. You cannot have, as long as you live from a sense of self, continuous positivity, continuous celebration, happiness.

I'm happy all the time, continuously happy. I'm always happy, happy, happy. And that doesn't work.

If you repeat it to yourself a thousand times a day, I am happy, for a while you'd feel, oh, it feels good. But every statement you make has an unmanifested opposite. Unless unhappiness exists, you can't be happy.

Or if you make the statement, I'm wealthy, rich beyond measure, and you say it many times, it's possible that some money, maybe a lot will come, unless you sit, don't move out of your armchair, but if it's combined with action, it's possible that money, because these things, thought is powerful, it attracts, it may work. But there's also the opposite. If you make the statement, I am rich and wealthy, in the unmanifested, the unspoken statement, you're making a statement for poverty, because the two polarities, they need

each other.

Unless there are poor people, you cannot be wealthy. For you to be rich requires a lot of people not to be rich, obviously. Otherwise the egoic sense of self is me, I'm rich, doesn't work.

Or if you are going to make it in the world, I am going to get there and I will make it, I'll make it. You can only make it if 10,000 other people don't make it. Otherwise making it has no meaning anymore.

So everything has an unmanifested opposite and in some way you will also have to experience the opposite. You cannot experience only on the level of mind, which is the level of manifestation, of phenomenal existence, you cannot only have one polarity. So if you affirm happiness and try to be happy every day, at some point you will be overtaken by unhappiness.

And if you affirm wealth and great wealth, at some point the stock market will crash and you experience the other extreme. So for a while it works, it's beautiful to experience that it works and then you go beyond the opposite to a place where it's no longer to do with happiness and unhappiness, but there's something that is beyond happiness and a deep sense of an abiding sense of peace. And it doesn't matter anymore whether on the surface there's a little wave of happiness or unhappiness.

There's a deep abiding, that's the goodness, I call that the goodness that has no opposite because it doesn't emanate from, it is not in the phenomenal realm. In the realm of phenomena you have the polarities. So not to be, for a while it's a person's path is to experience that yes, I can create certain things in this phenomenal world.

Even after you've gone beyond that you can continue to play with the phenomenal world because after all it is a play. If you want to make money, make some money, play with that. But it's not important to you anymore because your sense of self isn't in that.

You simply enjoy the play of form, not seeking a stronger sense of self, a me in that form. Then you can do anything. If you want a Rolls Royce, you have one, it'll make no difference and if you then lose it you'll be on a bicycle just as happy.

It's a play of form. The self isn't there that says I need that form and then is unhappy when it loses it. You lose your sense of self.

So you've moved through the stage of bathroom mirror. Laughter That's good. I'm glad you asked that question because it's many people have, would have similar question.

Thank you. Let's be still for a while. We talked about the importance of listening.

We talked about listening to nature, how important it is and you have been listening and

you are listening and the deeper significance of that state of listening, that state of open attention and this surroundings here are ideal for listening. To make them even more ideal, I would suggest that this afternoon after your lunch is complete, finished, we spend the rest of the afternoon in silence. Except perhaps during the session here if there's anything to say during the session, that's fine.

Of course you don't have to do it, just a suggestion. And then listen even more. There's nothing else to do but listening to nature, the sounds of nature, more importantly, the underlying field of stillness, which ultimately is the awareness itself.

We also talked about and we practiced listening to silence. What that means is it is the arising of awareness. When we say listen to silence, an almost meaningless statement to the mind because the mind is noise, the mind is content, the mind is form, every thought is form.

We are moving beyond form to the formless, therefore it becomes meaningless to the mind. Whatever is beyond form doesn't make much sense or the mind may try to make the formless into some other form and then you create a mental idol, God, an entity as if God were an entity, a finite entity. So the significance of listening to the silence, listening all this afternoon, you'll be able to do and right now also, and then a wonderful opportunity, listening to your mind, if it's still there, not making a problem out of thought.

When you listen to the mind, it doesn't have the heaviness that it has when you identify with mind streams. All that's left when you listen to the mind is mental noise. You listen to the noise and underneath the noise there is the attention, the field of attention.

So one could say when you listen, you become aware of the listener which is the awareness, the I am, the one that's beyond this or that, beyond time. And then knowing at first hand what the power of now actually means, because that is the now. The now is the awareness, the field of awareness, of consciousness.

It's emptiness and fullness at once. And in the state of listening, the me entity, the mind mate, just isn't there. It may be dormant, it may not be completely dissolved, it may reassert itself the moment the listening is lost, the little me is back.

But when there's the listening, that's the state of being awake. Then you fall back into a kind of dream world which is to be identified with thought. And while these words happen, it's just on the surface.

These words are just on the surface, floating on the surface. What matters here is the state of listening, the state of attention, of thoughtless awareness. Whatever fills that field, whatever arises in that field, doesn't matter that much.

It's all fine. Today in the field of awareness there's a palm tree. Next week in the field of

awareness arises the Empire State Building.

And it all, again, exists in the spaciousness, that spacious field. Or an old reaction arises in you, a no to what is, a complainer in the head, a waiting for the next moment, and then you listen to that, you're aware of that. So even that then just exists in the greater field of awareness, the spaciousness.

Let's sit here now and listen to a little piece that I brought that is designed for listening, a Japanese flute. The secret in listening to this is that the stillness out of which the sounds arise continuously is much more important than the sounds themselves. And the gaps in between the sounds are more important than the sounds.

The canvas, one could say, on which the sounds are painted is what matters. And so you are invited to listen to the canvas. Allow whatever is painted and what changes continuously to be there.

It's beautiful too. But continuously being aware of the underlying field of stillness. So this is a piece that was composed 700 years ago and has been used in Zen.

Listen. It requires alertness. According to the clock, it lasts for 15 minutes.

But that doesn't really mean anything. It takes you continuously into the timeless now. Feel as you listen.

Listen with the entire field of the body, not just with the ears. Your body is attentive and that's an important part of the state of listening. The attentiveness is throughout the body.

Every cell is, one could say, and I'm only, don't use it so much as a literal statement, a little pointer, only a little pointer. Every cell is in a state of alive alertness. The whole body is.

So you're listening with the entire body. If you can do it with this music, which is very helpful, you will also be able to do it when you listen to another person. That means you become the greatest therapist in the world, even if you have no label.

You bring that emanation of presence and transformation happens in that total acceptance of what is. So the entire body is alert and alive with presence in a state of listening attention.

[Speaker 3] (59:19 - 59:19)

Thank you.

[Speaker 1] (1:04:42 - 4:16:22)

¶¶ ¶¶ ¶¶ ¶¶ ¶¶ ¶¶ You will notice that music has no continuity in time. You couldn't, there's no tune to it that you could memorize. There's no past and future to it, no continuity from past into future.

You cannot remember the last moment and you don't know what's going to come next. It exists only in the now. The continuity in time is broken.

That's why we can, this is truly spiritual. It means no time to it. Nobody, after leaving here, is going to whistle that tune.

¶¶ Also when we, perhaps in a day or two, we may listen to another little piece. You may already have been doing that. Attention.

There's a very subtle point where the sound subsides into soundlessness, where the sound ends. The sound very softly ends and then dissolves into the silence. And that's a very, very subtle point.

It requires great alertness to see it. And one could say that's where the manifested merges back into the unmanifested. The sound is the manifested.

So listening, you can, this little practice can show you that it is possible to be rooted in the unmanifested, even while paying attention to the manifested world. Now, when you listen to a piece like that, the manifestation is reduced to just the sounds of the flute. So it's easy to see how that merges back and how it arises out of that stillness of the unmanifested.

And then in everyday life, you have not just one manifestation, which is the sound. You have hundreds and thousands of manifestations that arise within and without. And it's so easy to get lost in them, to lose yourself, to seek yourself in those things, whether they be thoughts that manifest, emotions that manifest, external events that manifest, and each one telling you, I matter.

Give me your full attention. Listen, I'm here. I am.

Wants to pull yourself into it. So then you, by seeking yourself in the manifested, in thought, what about me? By seeking yourself in the manifested or in external events that this matters so much and your whole attention flows out.

You can see when people discuss something, what are we going to do? It matters because they're lost in the manifested and no longer realize that it only matters in relative terms. In absolute terms, it doesn't.

But they have lost the absolute. We cannot lose it, but they don't know it. And it is as if you had lost it.

So when you seek yourself in any object, in any content, which is the normal state that

everybody's doing, you seek yourself in what arises as object or in consciousness, a content in the head or content of your life situation. All these are objects that arise in the vastness of the, out of the vastness of the unmanifested. And then, that's, you could say, that is the world.

So there's self-seeking in manifestation. Where am I? I have to work something out in my head.

I need to know who I am. And then images form and concepts and you have to dwell on these in thought. All meaning you are lost in, you're seeking yourself in the manifested world of objects, external objects, mind objects.

And by seeking yourself in those, you lose yourself because there is no self in those things. The deep, that is the deep truth of the Buddha. The, what he called in Pali language, anatta, no self.

He said, wherever you go, whatever you do, there's no self in any of those things. You see, all conditions are anatta, no self. That's the sublime truth.

And to see, sometimes when people study Buddhism, it becomes more content in the head. But they talk about anatta, I believe in no self, more content in the head. To actually, to see the simplicity and the sublime truth of that, that you cannot find yourself in any manifested form, any content, be it external or thought content, which includes beliefs and so on.

By seeking yourself there, you lose yourself there continuously. That's the frustration of normal existence. So here, we listen to that piece and we see the world of the manifested, if you listen with attention, becomes reduced to simple sounds that arise and subside.

But that really is, everything else is like that. It's just for a little while, it's all the manifest is the simple sounds and the sound of the wind arises and subsides. And underneath, so to speak, no word is exactly correct.

And in between, there's the soundlessness, bare, pure consciousness, unconditioned, hasn't been born into a form yet, hasn't become content, prior to thought, there's that. And that is also, if you look closely, there is something in your life, although most of you have gone through tremendous changes in this lifetime, almost as if you have had, well, not everyone perhaps, but some of you, as if you had had already several incarnations in this lifetime. And yet, and perhaps the story has changed in the head of who you thought you were, and so has gone through certain transformations.

It may even be dissolving, hopefully, as you sit here for a whole week, the story begins to dissolve. And so you've gone through many changes, almost incarnations, but something remained underneath the story, an essential sense of beingness or presence,

an I am, a sense of I am-ness underneath the story that is not this or that, just a sense of beingness. And that is what people are afraid of losing when they ask me, am I going to lose my individuality?

Am I going to lose this one thing that's so precious to me? I don't want to lose that. I'd rather not be here and rather suffer than lose that, than lose myself.

But the essence of individuality is that sense of I am-ness, which is beyond time, that is simply presence. No matter what happens on the surface of your life, the changing conditions, the changing content of your life, external and internal, if you look very deeply underneath it, there is I remains. And even if 10 years ago, perhaps you were a beggar and now you're a millionaire, underneath the changing content of your life, there is an I am-ness, a presence.

The essence of your being remains. Or the other way around, you were a millionaire 10 years ago and now you're a beggar. Underneath the changing story, there's an essential sense of self, but that is not the self that is mind-made.

It looks more like, this is why some traditions call it the absence of self, and it's perhaps closer to the truth than to say the self, but both are correct. They're different perspectives on the same. It's the absence of a manufactured sense of self, an artificial mind-made sense, an illusory temporary sense of, this is me, image-made.

It is beyond form, a sense of self not to do with form whatsoever. And really when people ask, I don't want to lose my individuality, what they don't want to lose is their essential being. And that's the only thing that's real that they can't lose.

Everything else you lose, but nothing really is lost. A temporary form dissolves. And this is why some people, even without ever having gone to any spiritual teaching, found that when suddenly all the forms in their lives collapsed, people who underwent disaster suddenly, dreadful disaster, everything collapsed, everything lost, all forms dissolved.

The whole me entity collapsed and suddenly a deep sense of presence or beingness, aliveness, peace. They have found their roots in the unmanifested, formless one life, what Jesus calls eternal life, which means timeless. Timeless doesn't mean it goes on and on.

It would be boring. Timeless. The timeless one life before it's born into something.

So when you identify with form, the deeper meaning of reincarnation is that every moment you identify with a new form, be it thought form, emotional form, external, I have acquired a new belief. Now the story of me and the entity, now I know who I am. Or for a while, an external form, a new relationship, I have acquired the person who is going to make me happy.

If anybody is listening to this tape at home, there's nothing wrong with the tape. So you are born into a new incarnation every time you identify with some new form. And it could just be a strain of thought and you're in it completely.

You reincarnate into that. Suddenly there's an angry thought stream. A new incarnation.

It's me. The anger asserts my identity as a self. This is why the self loves that.

Now I know who I am. And then that goes. And then you have to look for a new identity.

Okay, I'll buy a BMW. And for a little while, then you reincarnate. The ego incorporates it into its image of me for a little while.

Until after a few weeks, while you drive along, certain dissatisfaction arises again. That wasn't really it. Maybe I should try another make of car.

This is just a tiny example of that continuous seeking new sense of self, an added sense of self, a strengthened sense of self through some new identification with some new form. And all this happens. You are condemned to live like that for the rest of your life unless you know your roots in the unmanifested, formless one life.

Which is not a denial of the world of form. It's only now for the first time when you are rooted in the formless one life, which means you have access to the stillness within. Not only have access, you realize that is the essence of your being.

Then, instead of then going around and saying, I'm done with all form. I don't want to know anymore. I refuse to look at beauty and all those things because it's all temporary forms and they're all going to dissolve.

It's all dust. Some people have gone to that extreme in the search for the unmanifested. They have rejected the manifested, thinking that they will get there more quickly if they reject the manifested completely.

So, ascetic practices, extreme forms of asceticism, denial of all sensory pleasures. And so you become not interested. Whatever arises out there, you don't want to know.

Even beautiful flowers, not looking. It's dust. It will be dust again soon.

Of course, there's some truth in that. It will all be dust again soon. And yet, every form is an expression also of that manifested.

The sacredness and the holiness of the realm of the unmanifested also inhabits each form. Even the world of form is sacred. So, I don't suggest, I don't recommend that you deny the world of form.

But the more deeply you accept the world of form, whatever form arises now, the easier

it is to find and to dwell in the unmanifested. So there. And then go and enjoy phenomenal existence and the beauty of it and the sacredness of it.

Even play with it, if you want to. Or leave it alone and let it happen. You might live very simply because you don't need elaborate forms anymore to strengthen your sense of self.

You might live in the greatest of simplicity and enjoy the beauty of the simple things around you. Or you might want to enjoy wealth and acquire a Rolls Royce or mansion. Simply, you enjoy the play of form.

Not to find yourself in it. Then those things are very unsatisfying. Very unsatisfying.

They're satisfying for a little moment. When there's no self-seeking in anything you do, the world of form is beautiful and you can play with form. And in your actions, the actions that arise when you're rooted in the unmanifested, you no longer create suffering through what you do.

You no longer create suffering through what you think. You can see how much suffering you create for yourself through thinking. How thinking creates unhappiness about who you are, me, what's going to happen, what has happened, what might happen, what if, what should, demand, shouldn't be, and so on.

And so, in your thoughts, even thoughts are no longer problematic when there's no self-seeking there. And then, what flows into your actions is not the neediness of seeking yourself through that and then hanging onto this or wanting to be rid of that. There's a freedom in relation to things and people around you.

You allow everything to be and when it leaves you, as it will, everything will leave you, because forms are impermanent, they come and go, then there's an acceptance because you already know that forms dissolve eventually. In one way or another, they dissolve. They leave you or they dissolve.

And that's fine. Death, even death is welcomed. And death is very beautiful because death is a form dissolves into the formless.

And the moment of death, not any kind of death, you will see the beauty of that and the sacredness of any loss in your life. This seems almost perverse, paradoxical, the total opposite of what the egoic sense of self believes, the sacredness of losing a form in whatever it may be. Because at that moment, and this is, do you remember the music we listened to where the sound, there's a little blurred edge to the sound where the sound merges into silence.

The sound goes into soundlessness. This is a death. Each time the sound dies, there's a very sacred moment because a form dissolves and in that moment, the formless shines

through the hole left behind, so to speak, by the disappearing, the dissolving form.

Intuitively, deep down, perhaps every human knows that because every human have an instinctive respect for death. So in many European countries, the older traditional countries, when you see a dead body or funeral, everybody takes off their hat. They might have disliked that person intensely and yet when that person has just died, they become quite serious and go, they don't know why, they just do it.

Because they know the form has dissolved and that is why loss of any kind is so beautiful. Even a little loss like losing some money. If you can just, a moment of stillness, look at the emptiness left behind by the form instead of turning away from it and there's the unmanifested.

And originally, those humans who found that realm, originally they were no spiritual teachers. They were certain humans who experienced deep loss and somehow said yes to the emptiness left behind or they were so stunned by that loss that the old reactive mechanism wasn't operating and there was just a, ah! And even the mind couldn't continue anymore because it was stunned by the loss.

The whole machinery of mind came to a stop and suddenly they found such intense peace and aliveness arising. And the mind couldn't understand it. It said, what's that?

It doesn't make sense. Here there's death, I've lost all that and there's such deep peace. It's as if one can almost say every form hides God.

And this is why death reveals it again, reveals him, her, it. And so we welcome loss when it comes. And many of you have only begun to awaken through some loss.

So many of you have already, perhaps not fully understood how it works, but have already experienced significant loss one way or another. And that was the beginning of the awakening. Whereas before the loss, all the forms around you were intact for a while.

That was fine. But now the furniture was intact all around you and then something happened and suddenly a big gaping hole appeared in the wall. Beautiful.

So that is the sacredness of death, which is what loss is. And that's the sacredness of this moment also, because you're entering death here freely. You find death before it finds you, as it says in one of the ancient scriptures, you find death before it finds you.

What is dissolving here is not yet the physical form, that'll come a little bit later, but more importantly, the psychological form of me. And identification, it consists of identifications. So the greatest fear of the ego is loss.

The greatest fear of the ego is death. And the realm of the formless one life is what Buddhists sometimes call Amaravati, the deathless realm. Buddhists always express

everything in negative terms.

They don't say what it is. They say what it is not. What it is reveals itself.

You don't need to say it, the Buddha said. So everything in Buddhism is negative. The deathless realm, the realm where there's no death.

Jesus used that the same in positive terms, eternal life. All this was already 2,600 years ago. If you had listened to the Buddha, he would have said the same things, and he did.

Slightly different words, different language. No self in any form. Anatta, every form is impermanent.

Anicca, impermanence of every form. No self in it, anatta. And identification with any form is dukkha, suffering.

That's it. Simple. No object is it.

No content is it. Or as it says in one of the ancient Upanishads, not that, I don't remember every word of it literally, but just, not that which the eye sees, but that whereby the eye can see. Know that alone to be Brahman, the eternal, and not what people here adore.

Not that which the ear hears, but that whereby the ear can hear. Know that to be Brahman, the eternal, and not what people here adore. Not that which the mind thinks, but that whereby the mind can think.

Know that alone to be the eternal, and not what people here adore. That is the ultimate truth. And let's remember to keep noble silence after lunch for the rest of the afternoon and to listen, just listen.

Thank you. Boom. When you look at something or someone without thought in stillness, who is looking?

Not the person anymore. Without thought, there isn't a person. Who is looking through those eyes?

It doesn't have to be looking. It could be anything. Listening, touching.

Who is looking? Can we have a label for it? Labels are dangerous.

I'll use one anyway. Consciousness is looking at its creation. God creates the world, it says, in the beginning of the Bible, and then he, she, it saw that it was good.

And that's what it's like when you look without thought. You're really looking at yourself in different forms. That I am-ness that I talked about this morning, that essential deepest sense of beingness that never leaves you, that is inseparable from now, that is the now,

we call the now in its depth, is being itself, your essential self, your essential identity beyond form.

And then you can see the same I am-ness looking through the eyes of a bird, or you can see it in a flower. And you can even see it in so-called inanimate objects, because even a so-called inanimate object has beingness to it, it is. So it has beingness.

And any physicists would know that it is a field of vibrant energy. So what we perceive as an inanimate object isn't really inanimate. And even that, that has beingness.

And you recognize the beingness because there's stillness here, looking through the stillness. And this looking isn't necessary to recognize beingness. Beingness is beyond sense perceptions, but it can flow into that.

And then that sense of separation, me and the rest of the world, goes. Really, you are that bird. You are that tree.

And that human being, the self-recognition of being. The I am-ness. No matter how obscured it may be.

And in most humans, it's obscured by illusion, identification with form. And yet, in the stillness, you look, you see through the illusion in that other form and recognize yourself. And you could even look at a distant galaxy through a telescope.

And if you look through a telescope at the closest galaxy to ours, I don't know if those of you who are not familiar with astronomy may not be aware that a galaxy is an entire universe consisting of billions of suns, probably each with their planetary systems. Billions. Many much bigger than our sun.

And you look at that through a telescope and all you see is a little smudge of luminosity. But you know that you're looking at a whole universe. And even that, a sense of the essence of that is not separate from who you are.

You can only know that in the absence of interpretation. And what I'm now translating into language, you don't know through language. It's a deep knowing, a sensing, direct knowing.

And with that comes, that's love. When you know it as yourself, then everything you look upon or hear or feel was love. The recognition of oneness.

That's what love is. So basically what happens is what God is reported to have done just after creating the world happens when you look upon the universe in stillness. I did a good job there.

What we call evil or bad things is an ego perspective. On the one hand, it's an egoic view, an egoic interpretation of the form dissolving. It's death is perceived as bad

because there's identification with form.

It's dreadful. When you only know yourself as form, death is dreadful. So that is regarded as dreadful.

So when forms die, that's regarded. Another aspect of bad or evil is suffering inflicted on yourself or other forms again due to the ignorance of being that separate form. The illusion of form creates the suffering.

So ultimately, the whole of suffering is part of that egoic illusion. But through it, humans awaken. And this is our silent afternoon, well, more or less, unless you forgot about it.

And those who wish to continue into the night are free to do so. Noble silence. And those who wish to remain in silence and continue simply in the state of listening to whatever arises, not even looking for stillness.

Looking for stillness isn't stillness. Simply allowing this moment to be and listen to what arises in the now. And watch thoughts, emotions, reactions.

So those who wish to remain until nighttime or until they go to bed can do so. And if anybody approaches you and you wish to remain in silence, you just go. And then they know that you're in silence.

And perhaps we could have one or two tables in the dining hall. We put a little notice on silent table. And then we put another notice on some other tables, noisy tables.

That makes sense. Do we need some air in here? Perhaps.

I'll address some of the written questions this afternoon. And I've received other letters that I hope to respond to with various things that may not require an answer here. So I hope to get back to everybody the next day or two.

This isn't a question really, just a reminder of something. Dear Eckhart, I have a request that is for Judaism to be mentioned in the next edition of the Power of Now. As you may know, Hilder, a Jewish philosopher, has said, if not now, when?

It's not only a then question. I appreciate your attention to this. Thank you very much.

Thank you very much. I wasn't aware that he had said that. And of course, it's a wonderful statement.

And it reminds me of what Ramana Maharshi called the essence of all religion contained in a statement in the Old Testament, which is, be still and know that I am God. Somebody read that or taught that to Ramana Maharshi, or I don't think he had read the Bible, and he immediately said, that's the essence of all religion, of all spirituality. Be still and know that I am God.

And that's in the Old Testament. A beautiful mantra followed, once it's been uttered, it's followed by that to which it points, the stillness. So once it's been uttered, allow it to take you into the stillness to which it's a pointer.

And that knowing of who you are and the essence of your being is beyond words. Another question, yes. Your marvelous book does not give any credits to J.

Krishnamurti, although at least to this reader, evidence of his influence seems to me quite clear. Could you please comment on this? Is there possibly an accidental editorial commission omission?

You give credit to David Bohm, Kay's frequent collaborator, and acknowledge Renny Frumkin in your acknowledgements. As you may have read in the introduction to the book or in an interview, when my ego, the egoic self-image and its storyline self-destructed, I had no idea what had happened. There was no understanding, there was simply peace.

So the subsequent years were spent in trying to understand the peace that passes all understanding. When I saw those lines in my endeavor to understand, although it wasn't terribly important, it would be nice to understand what this is all about. I'm at peace.

Yesterday I was in dreadful, and for many years in dreadful despair and conflict and anxiety and fear. And where does this, what is this? It's very strange.

I'd like to know. So at some point I read Jesus's words, the peace that passes all understanding and realized that he didn't understand it either. Otherwise he would have said, because it's beyond what the mind can grasp.

Nevertheless, I continued visiting some teachers, asking questions, reading. And some of the teachings or teachers I found spoke to me immediately and very deeply. There was an immediate recognition there, as if I was hearing myself and saying, oh yes, that's what it is.

And so one of them was Krishnamurti, another was Ramana Maharshi. And I remember having glanced at a book by Krishnamurti before it happened. Before it happened, my search was not spiritual, at least not consciously spiritual.

I was looking for some intellectual answer, philosophy and so on. And I had picked up a book by Krishnamurti and read a few pages, and after a while put it down and said, I don't know what he's talking about. It's like sand running through my fingers.

I read and, whoosh. And then afterwards I read again after this had happened and immediately I knew what he was talking about and the power of the teaching. So there was a strong recognition there, just as with Ramana Maharshi.

Not so much that I, they put new ideas into my head. It's rather seeing the essence, understanding the essence of all spirituality immediately. And Krishnamurti teaches in the negative tradition mainly like Justice Buddhism does.

He doesn't inspire with lovely statements. He always, he just points to what the truth is not. And in accordance with those negative traditions, just like Buddhism, once you have seen illusion clearly, then the truth stands revealed by itself.

So a negative teaching like Buddhism or Krishnamurti never puts the truth into words. 90% of Krishnamurti is like that, but occasionally he does say something positive. This is positive and negative and it's not in the everyday context.

And there were other teachings that were meaningful. Buddhism, a deep love for the teaching of the Buddha, Christ's teaching and the Christian mystics and always immediate recognition. And I love the truth, no matter in what form it comes and recognizing it shining through sometimes even heavy forms, culturally conditioned forms and yet the truth shines through.

I had originally written a chapter on various teachings and the essence contained in them, but it wasn't included in the book and it was decided to keep the book to a large extent free of too many references to other teachings because all the teachings are in there anyway and it speaks for itself. At some point, perhaps that chapter will be published somewhere else. In the meantime, and I believe in John Parker's book that is available here, I speak about Krishnamurti also in the interview.

I don't feel so much that there has been an influence by Krishnamurti as a continuation of a teaching stream, not just Krishnamurti, and I believe I talk about it in John Parker's book, that there's two streams of Ramana Maharshi which is a heart-centered stream and of Krishnamurti, which is a teaching based on recognizing the false kind of together into one. So a new stream comes, two streams come together into one. David Bohm, by the way, I didn't mention the person who wrote the introduction to my book mentioned him in the introduction.

The person you mentioned, Reni Frumkin, whom I met after she moved away from Los Angeles where she had a Krishnamurti center. Much later, I met her in a bookshop in Sausalito called the Bearded Giraffe. And then I stayed in her house in Sausalito for several months and wrote part of the book there.

That's why her name is mentioned in the introduction. And this brings me to another question that somebody asks. What other books do you recommend that are clear like yours and are a transmission?

Well, many spiritual books are written through... Many spiritual books have a screen of culture, a screen of cultural or accumulated over the years, cultural accumulations,

concepts, images, beliefs. So when you read Christianity, you have to see the truth beyond the screen of the culture out of which the teaching came.

There are very few teachings that do not have the screen which sometimes obscures the truth which may be there shining, but unless you know it already deeply within yourself, you may not be able to see the truth shining through because the screen may be too heavy. The cultural screen, the screen of conditioning. So there are some wonderful works in the Christian tradition.

There are some wonderful works in the Hindu tradition and the Buddhist tradition. Relatively few that do not have the screen of a culture that has accumulated over a long period of time. Even Jesus had to use the terminology of Judaism out of which he came.

Nobody would have understood a word if he had used other words. So to communicate, he had to use that language. And so that applies to many.

So when I speak of books, then you need to take into account there are very few books that do not have the screen. The question is whether when you pick up that book, you will be able to see the truth shining through the words rather than getting caught up in the words which then becomes like a net and you're caught in this net of words. And the mind may even like it.

The mind says, oh great, I have new beliefs now. You haven't gone beyond the words. You remain on the level of words which are beliefs.

That's how religions develop without the depth of true spiritual realization. So the amazing, I'm very amazed that my book is sometimes is read by people who have studied a lifetime of spirituality and are extremely knowledgeable and they relate to it and see the truth. And others who haven't picked up a spiritual book in their lives the first time they pick up and it is meaningful to them.

How that is possible, I don't know. It just happened. And it's wonderful.

Krishnamurti of course also is free of cultural, to a large extent free of, he does not use an existing tradition to speak through. There's a very powerful book come out of India which has almost very little because it's a good translation, has very little cultural baggage because those certain concepts that are used are translated quite well in I Am That by Nisargadatta and I Am That. It's a book you don't read for information.

You just pick it up, read a couple of pages and you have enough for a few days or just half a page. It simply, it points continuously to the truth without, it's the most unadulterated book perhaps there is of spirituality. Then there are other books that have a little bit of screen and yet the truth shines through.

So if you're not adverse to this Christian tradition, some people have, they don't like it

because of certain past happenings. If the Christian is not too much of a barrier to you or rather if you feel even drawn to that, then a person who uses, a teacher who uses Christian terminology but in a deeper sense than conventional church Christianity is Joel Goldsmith. And any of his books speak the truth, shining through the language of Christianity and of the Bible of the Old and New Testament.

Joel Goldsmith, any book. And then if you feel more drawn towards the Eastern or Hindu tradition, then of course Ramana Maharshi speaks very clearly with a minimum of cultural baggage, just enough he uses to be understood by his surrounding culture. But the truth shines through very clearly.

Krishnamurti, again, if you're only, if you haven't yet gone beyond mind, it's easy to get caught up in mind when you read Krishnamurti. He continuously points beyond. Once you've gone beyond mind, you can read and it goes more deeply and then it will be powerful and meaningful.

Most books by Krishnamurti were originally the spoken word and were then edited to become books. But my favorite book by Krishnamurti was actually written, a beautiful work called Krishnamurti's Notebook. And again, you can read just a page or two and it's a meditation.

For a long time, I still love it. The Course in Miracles, I used it for a while in teaching and again, there you have the medium of the Christian language looks quite old-fashioned to many people. It looks quite heavy, the terminology, the screen of words and yet it points to the truth continuously.

The Course in Miracles, again, only if you have no inner aversion to Christian language and the old-fashioned patriarchal language with masculine pronouns. If you have any other favorite books yourself that you believe other people might use, leave a note for me here and I'll look at it. It would be nice to know what books have been meaningful and powerful for you.

And of course, not to forget the source texts of the great traditions. The Tao Te Ching, the ancient Chinese work. The Bhagavad Gita, the Indian scripture.

The Upanishads from India. The New Testament and the Old Testament. Old Testament is a mixture of deep insights and cultural stuff.

So you have to see where the truth is. New Testament also, to some extent, is a mixture of spiritual truth and some cultural stuff mixed in with it. So you have to see where the pearls are and where the pebbles are.

But those are the eternal, particularly the Tao Te Ching. You read it again and again, but getting a good translation may not be easy. I've been feeling, I've felt drawn a few times to translating the Tao Te Ching.

Now this might seem strange because I don't know any Chinese. All I know is where it came from. And often when I read it, I know that's not quite it.

That's not really what he said. And at other times I say, oh yes, that's true. So we'll see.

Some Buddhist works, perhaps on Zen. There are some good books on Zen. Don't recall the titles at the moment.

A few weeks ago, I was standing on a mountain in China. And there was, carved in stone, there was some Chinese writing about this size, a Chinese symbol writing. And I asked my host, what does that mean?

And he said, oh, that means Buddha. And I said, oh, it's nice. It survived the Maoist upheavals, perhaps because it's on top of a mountain.

And then I remembered that I had asked him about various Chinese signs before. And many of the symbols, they're originally pictorial symbols. Long, long, long time ago, they were little pictures.

And then became more and more abstract. I had asked him about some others, and I had remembered then I had asked him about a sign, and he said, that's love. And then I asked, yeah, but it seems to be two symbols put together here.

And he said, that's right. The symbol on the left means female. The symbol on the right means heart.

And the two together means love. And the symbol for female originally was a pictorial with a woman with her legs crossed. You can still see that, crossed legs.

And so I remember that, and I said, but here too, there seem to be two. It seems to, the Buddha symbol also seems to consist of two. And he said, that's right.

The first one, which is a very simple symbol, goes like that. That means man, or human. And the next one means no.

And so there's the truth. I don't need to explain, because I've been talking about it for several days. Is it wrong to videotape you?

Whenever people have asked me if they can tape something, I've said yes. For a long time, the talks were not being taped on audio. And people just wanted to capture.

It's not really a need, but I honor that desire to want to capture that. So they brought little tape recorders and videos, and they asked me sometimes, and I said, yes, go ahead. And then after a while, my publisher noticed that there were all kinds of copies of copies of copies floating around and sometimes barely audible.

And she said, we need to do this properly because the form needs to honor the essence. The essence is of great value. So let's keep the form as good as we can so that the form honors the essence.

And that's also why the book was published in a nice edition hardback. It could have been published originally more cheaply. So that the form honors the essence.

My publisher said, don't you agree that the form should honor the essence? And I said, well, yes, that's absolutely true. I agree with that.

But I still can't promise you, I said, that when people ask me if they can record, that no will come out of my mouth. Yes. And then she said, well, that's all right.

Kim will say no for you. So poor Kim has to say no. But I honor your desire to capture it.

And I promise that soon there will be videos available with proper lighting and so on. And the audio tapes are now available. It's being recorded.

But I honor very much your desire to capture this. But it's already in you anyway. The essence is transmitted.

Even if you forgot every word of what's being said here during these days, even if you forgot every word, nothing would be lost. The essence would be there. And I wouldn't be surprised if you went home and somebody asked you, what did he talk about?

Well, he must have said a lot after all these days. What aspects of ourselves allows or invites the mind to be silent? Is it the soul?

What aspects of ourselves allow or invites the mind to be silent? What is it that draws us to silence? To stillness.

Well, stillness draws you to stillness. Stillness emerges. What is stillness?

The unmanifested, unconditioned consciousness. Ultimately, if you like the Istik language, God. Presence emerges.

Presence is stillness. As it emerges in its initial stages, sometimes a seeking begins, a dissatisfaction with the conditioned egoic entity, with your life. Presence cannot yet emerge.

And sometimes, we talked about this yesterday, presence builds up, builds up, and cannot yet emerge unobstructedly. And so it needs to create an opening. This is why in many of you, that's already happened.

If it hasn't happened, it may not need to happen anymore because you're here. But quite a few of you are here because something happened that cracked open the shell of egos.

The consciousness wanted to emerge, was being obstructed, and then it seemed perhaps it might have been something from within.

Furniture, the content, this is all that's me, my life. And suddenly, so what aspect of ourselves? I don't use the word soul, but essence, the essence of your being draws you to itself.

One could say it is a pull back to the source, the homeward journey. After going outward into differentiation, mind is differentiation, analysis, breaking the world up into little bits and pieces, greater and greater fragmentation and differentiation, a sign of this being the complexity of the world that we inhabit. I mean, I can't figure things out.

Very complex. So gone out from the source more and more until finally there's complete identification with form. The formless one source is not known anymore.

That is the state of poverty, of spiritual deprivation. That's the state described in the New Testament in Jesus' parables of the lost, the prodigal son, the lost son, who goes out from his father's house, demands his inheritance from his father, and then travels to a distant country, away, away, away, and spends all his wealth and becomes destitute and a beggar. Doesn't even know who he is anymore.

Just a beggar. And then comes a call. I don't know if that's actually in the New Testament, but this is an older parable, actually, that has existed in the Middle East for a long time.

And it says that a call comes from the father, which really means the source. You could say the mother, doesn't matter. A call comes, a reminder, and in the story, the father sends a messenger.

And the messenger says, don't you remember who you are, to this beggar sitting there? And no. And then, so perhaps the messenger in the story could be seen as a spiritual teacher or some spiritual teaching coming through in some other form.

And then there's the dawning of, oh. And this is when you listen to the truth and there's a readiness for being. There is a sudden recognition of, oh, yes.

Nobody needs to convince you. It's very different from mind stuff that says, you better believe me. You immediately see there's a pause.

The mind stops. There's a deep recognition that comes from a deeper level than mind. And it always says, oh, yes, that's true.

I know that. And nothing could be told you that is of true significance that you don't know. So it's whatever I've said so far, you have already known.

It is always a recognition of the truth because the truth is already known because you

are one with the truth in your essence already. And that's the beauty of listening to a teaching that comes from the true place. And it's not only the words.

When the words are being spoken because they emanate from that true place of being, of oneness, the words are received and they carry the energy of that state of being or oneness. So there's more to the words than the informational value that they contain when there's spiritual discourse that comes from the true source. But normally with language, language is there to convey information.

But with spiritual discourse, it comes from a true place. The informational level is there, but it's not the most vital one. The most vital level is the energy frequency that each word carries, which is the energy frequency of the source of being.

Presence speaks, not a person. It comes out of that place. So it's new and fresh.

Even if it's been said many times before, it's new and fresh each time. It comes from that place. It carries the energy of that place.

And so the words are being received. Usually the words are being received by the mind. The mind then decodes the meaning from the sound, so retranslates it into meaning.

But with spiritual discourse, something additional happens. It goes into the mind. The mind decodes.

And then it goes on. The energy travels deeper than mind into the essence of the unconditioned consciousness itself. It's now beyond words.

It's simply being speaking to being. And there it's recognized. And this is where the power of a spiritual teaching lies.

And the same thing can happen when you read a book. And this seems strange that this is possible. You read a book that comes from that place, that was written from that place, not just through accumulated mind knowledge.

And immediately you know there is a power there and an inner recognition that isn't there when you read a book that only comes from analysis or accumulated knowledge. So that is the transformative power of spiritual discourse because that's the place it comes from. And that's the place it reaches in you.

It can happen sometimes that a spiritual teaching or discourse cannot get past the mind that is attempting to decode the sound of the words. So it gets stuck in the net of mind. The words are being spoken, goes into your ears, into the brain, into the mind.

The mind starts working on them, decoding the sounds. The meaning is there. But it's working so hard that the energy charge that is more important than the words cannot get past the screen of mind.

In that case, you would be sitting there, you could listen to the most powerful teaching and all you hear is the informational level of the words because your mind is of such density or is so hyperactive that it doesn't allow the more powerful frequency of being to go through it. So it gets caught in the net or the screen of mind. And then listening to a spiritual discourse becomes a very unsatisfying thing after a while.

The mind says, well, is that all? What else? What does it really mean?

So then it wouldn't be working. And occasionally that happens. For most of you or all of you here, if you're still here, who knows, one or two may have departed already.

And that might have been the case if it didn't get past the screen of mind. Why sit here and listen? I mean, you can read more interesting books than that on the level of information.

So that is, and then also once you, this has been activated in you, also you can save yourself a lot of time and money because there are many books that you don't need to read anymore. And you know, most of you probably are at that stage now. You can go into a bookshop, pick up a book, open it, read half a page or a page or less, maybe just a line.

And you'll know whether it has the dimension of being to it, that whether the power resides there. Somehow it got into the page. I don't understand how it happens.

And then you feel, yes, this comes from the source. Or you see, that's the mind speaking. It may still be interesting, even helpful.

It has its place, but the power, true power is lacking. The transformative power is lacking. It could give you interesting ideas, but the transformative power would not be there.

So that's good. You don't have to accumulate a vast amount of books now. You just go into a bookshop and sense, open a book, read.

And then you know whether you want to buy it or not, read it. It's beautiful how that works. It's wonderful.

And again, the same happens when you go to a talk. You might have, when I, after this transformation, I visited quite a few teachers. And quite often I went, it was announced, so-and-so is coming to speak.

And I would go and listen. A monk from here or there, Christian, Buddhist, whatever. Or a famous author from this and that, spirituality.

And often immediately after two minutes, one minute, you know, another mind. This is just the mind speaking. Interesting perhaps, but essence.

Where is the essence? Where is the being? And occasionally, yes, it's there.

And they might not even have spoken English very well. A monk coming from some distant country, only speaking broken English, and yet the essence is there. How do we set goals, work for social change, and stay in the present?

A brief answer would be not to look for salvation in the future. To do what you have to do. Let's deal with one aspect first.

Set goals for your life, perhaps. Now, when you're not present, when presence is not already here, many of the goals that you set will be egoic goals. And egoic goals promise you some kind of salvation in the future.

I need to achieve this or that in order to be someone, in order to know who I am, or so that others know who I am, or I get recognition or a sense of security through the position that I want to achieve, or whatever. The ego always compares itself to someone else, to others. So I want to rise up so that I can feel good about myself when I compare myself with others.

Self-esteem comes in here, pursued as a goal, so that I can feel better about myself. When you're in egoic endeavors, it's always an attempt to be better in some way than somebody else, or to make it. You can only make it as a goal to enhance your sense of self if others don't make it.

Because if everybody makes it, I talked about that yesterday, your ego has no food in it. If everybody were rich, let's say your egoic goal is to be rich. Let's say that you live in a country where every person is a millionaire.

Then being rich could no longer satisfy yourself, your sense of self. You would have to look for something else. So it would no longer really be a desirable egoic goal.

So the most vital thing, as far as this question is concerned, is the basis for all goals is your present state of consciousness. Some people are still trapped in distant goals that they had in the past, and they're still trying to achieve that. I know somebody who occasionally came to see me She's a wonderful teacher.

She is with children. She performs miracles with children. She goes and teaches at the most difficult schools.

And I've told her to write a book about how, through her work, children become transformed, children who have been hurt very much from very difficult backgrounds. But in her late teens, she had this idea that, I want to be famous, and I want to be a famous actress. And then in her early twenties, she went to some acting school, but then couldn't get a job as an actress, and so she became a teacher.

And a very wonderful teacher. And that's obviously where the mission, her life's purpose lies. It's there.

But what survived in her head was the image of me as a famous actress. So there was great unhappiness, because this isn't what I imagined for my life. I'm just a schoolteacher, the mind said.

I'm just a schoolteacher. That's all. I'll be insignificant.

What is all this? What are these beliefs? And then she phoned up an advertising agency, trying to do commercials, so get into the movies that way, while she was already doing wonderful teaching work.

And then she called me up and said, I've got an interview, they've selected me on the short list for an advertising spot for jeans. So she was getting close to achieving her goals. They were total illusion.

In her essential being, because she was going through transformation, otherwise she wouldn't have been coming to see me. She was already far beyond those goals that came from her unconscious past. But the mind pattern still operated.

And two days later she called me up and said, I didn't get it. I was in great pain. And finally we had a session, and there was a little bit of a breakthrough.

She saw the absurdity of that. So you can see how many goals, may even be goals from your unconscious past that are still operating in your head, that are telling you of what you need to achieve. So the basis for all goals, first of all, let's get the foundation right.

The foundation is this moment. Let's get this moment right. If this moment isn't right, no matter what goals you pursue, nothing will satisfy you.

What does it mean to get this moment right? It means to recognize the rightness of this moment. Not to do anything to get this moment right, but to recognize what is, is already right.

In other words, to become aligned with what is, instead of trying to run away to some distant goal in the future that's going to save me. So you begin, that is the foundation. Are you at home in the now?

That's the question. If you're not at home, you're not going to get home in the future, because that's not where it is. So no matter how many goals you pursue or how much you run towards the future, you won't get to home.

If you're not home, don't realize you're home already. So it's through the simple act of surrendering to what is, yes to now, completely aligned with the suchness, to use Buddha's expression, completely aligned with the suchness of now. Presence, present,

not running away, completely here.

Rooted in being. And then see what happens. Something may come into your mind, arises from a deeper level, and then takes the form of an insight or an idea of what it is that you need to do.

This is what I need to do. And then action comes. But you don't do it to achieve some improved sense of self, because the sense of self is already, you've gone beyond the mind-made self in the vibrant aliveness of presence.

That's your identity. Then what operates is presence itself, no longer a little entity trying to make it. The intelligence that runs the universe then moves through.

It may move into your mind, and then the mind suddenly has a new insight. Hmm. And then action comes out of that insight and you do something.

You pick up the phone, whatever action is needed. Or maybe nothing comes, and that's fine too. I don't know what to do with my life, but it's fine as it is.

It's fine now. My life for quite a few years was very, very static. First I lived in London after the transformation.

I lived in Cambridge. I lived in London. And then I moved away from the big city and lived in the country, a very secluded existence.

Occasionally somebody would come to see me, and that went on. I had a little garden. I had occasionally a group, seven, eight, nine, 10 people once a week.

And it went, a year passed, another year, another year, another year. And sometimes the mind said, isn't there something more significant for you to do? I didn't know yet.

It was fine. I couldn't even say that I waited. It was just how it was.

And suddenly one morning, I woke up, and I knew I have to move to the west coast of North America. Why? And then I called somebody and said, I'm moving to the west coast.

What for? I don't know. But the certainty was complete.

There was no doubt. And I knew immediately I was going to do it. Just the doing that required a little bit of time to get rid of everything.

Explain to a few more people. I had to invent some excuse for my mother, who already thought I was mad anyway. And then I didn't know.

I had one superficial acquaintance in California and one acquaintance in Vancouver, both on the west coast. First thing that occurred to me when the realization of west coast came, California. I don't know why.

And this person I knew in Vancouver said, come visit me first in Vancouver and then you can go to California from there. So I booked a flight to Vancouver, arrived, quite liked it. I liked the energy field.

Stayed for more than a few days. I stayed for a few weeks, not knowing why I was there. Still sitting around, walking around.

Then went, took a bus to California. Stayed in an expensive hotel for one night, in a cheap hotel for more nights. And then I sat in a cheap hotel.

What am I doing here? The acquaintance I had, I visited her. She had a meditation group there and she said, somebody has arrived from England who needs somewhere to stay.

And the man said, he can stay at my place. I have a spare room. So I moved in there, still not knowing what I was doing.

And after a while, the mind came in a few times and said, why are you here? What are you doing? And one day, the impulse came to buy a notebook.

And then I got out of my suitcase some pile of papers that I had taken with me of little notes and writings accumulated over the years after I'd had my little groups. I'd often written things down that I had said. And I picked up a pen and a question came, which was similar to one of the questions that somebody had actually asked.

And then an answer came. And I knew after one page of writing that I was writing a book. Before all the writing over those years, I didn't know I wasn't writing a book.

I was just making notes. There wasn't the energy stream there. But suddenly, there was an enormous energy stream.

And I knew it's a book. And in the writing, the energy stream built up. And every day, I got up earlier and earlier to write.

Okay, so it was good. My days were full now. The energy stream was there.

It felt good. Then my visa ran out. I had to go back to England.

I arrived back in England, again with the writings I'd already done, sat at a desk, picked up the pen. Nothing happened. The next day, sat again, picked up the pen.

Nothing happened. And after the third or fourth day, I realized why I had to leave England, although I love England and have a deep affinity with the country. And yet, the book, the energy field there wasn't right for the book to be born.

The energy field on the West Coast was needed. I didn't know that. And then I went back to the West Coast, again Vancouver, California, Vancouver.

And no matter whether I was in Vancouver or California, the writing immediately flowed again. So when I went back after England, and it started again, then I knew beyond doubt why I had to come out. So I obeyed the impulse without knowing why.

So I had a goal, but it wasn't a very distant goal. I knew one step, and I obeyed the impulse, the realization, to take that one step. But I didn't know what would follow that one step.

I didn't demand that I should know what would follow that one step. What if I run out of money? Where am I going to stay?

What's the point? What innumerable questions the mind could have asked, because the mind wants certainty. The mind wants to control the future.

It hates uncertainty. It hates not knowing what's going on. So there comes that continuous surrender.

And with the surrender comes trust, which you cannot manufacture, not even through affirmations. No matter how many affirmations you use, you cannot manufacture trust. I'm looking at you when I talk.

You cannot manufacture. Trust comes through surrender to now, because surrender to now is the end of fear, because fear is the ego's impossible desire to control the future in some way. And it cannot.

It knows that it can't, and so there's great fear, because this future is so uncertain. Anything could happen. So what is trust other than absence of fear?

Trust. When there's no fear, there's trust. It can't be generated.

So that's all you ever need to know is the next step, and it's when you are present, you listen to what comes. And it comes. It's very different.

Sometimes people get confused when suddenly a little idea comes into their head, and then they believe, okay, I'm meant to do that. And the next day, the opposite idea comes into their head, and then there's suddenly great turmoil. Oh, maybe that wasn't right at all.

Maybe that's right. Maybe I should go there. Then you know it's just mind stuff.

When there is certainty beyond doubt, it comes from a deeper place. When there's conflicting thoughts going on, you're in confusion, that's mind stuff. And the way out of mind stuff is be here now.

Be here now. Just this. Be in the body.

Alert. Present. Recognize the rightness of this moment.

That's how you get this moment right. This is such a big question. I'll have to answer it immediately.

But not until we've had some stillness. Okay, now let's see what the question was. Yes.

Have you thought about what you want to do in the future? Best wishes? No.

Well, something like that. No. Well, I knew what places I'm going to visit in the next few months, but that's all.

So what's on my calendar that I know? But that's all I know about the future. It seems to just unfold.

But there are events that are planned ahead, a year in ahead and more. But that only scribbles on the calendar, so it's not really future. Everybody survived, I assume, the adventure tours.

A couple of people fell in the water, I hear, but survived. And everybody survived some mind attacks or pain body attacks or other forms of turbulence which happened or are still happening. That's what somebody was saying the other day, a week-long retreat is long enough for these things to arise.

And that's good. Also long enough for these things to subside, perhaps, or to be simply allowed in the spaciousness. You may remember we, on the first day, I believe, we talked about bringing spaciousness to whatever happens here.

So that means to bring a stillness even to drama, if drama should happen. There's the drama and there's the wind and there's space around it. By wind here, I meant there's the vastness and then there's the little human dramas happen in it.

When peace lasts for too long, the mind comes up and says, it's time for a bit more drama. Otherwise you'll forget who you are. You're beginning to dissolve without the drama.

Sometimes the drama is in that rest, simply played inside your mind with yourself, sitting alone in your tent. Should I have come here or shouldn't I, was it? Or what's going to happen next week?

Or something happened, somebody around you said something or did something. Old pain body stuff coming up. Pain body saying, I can't wait any longer now.

I'm coming up anyway. And maybe yesterday there were no sessions, perhaps a better opportunity for the pain body to come up. And then either you identified with it, became it, fueled it with thinking.

That's all right too. Or you brought a stillness or witnessing presence to it and simply allowed it to be there without it turning into me, a me, a self. So there's something faster than any content in your life.

The sea of consciousness, stillness. And interesting, you may have been able to observe it in yourself or others. There are quite a few people living relatively closely together here.

It's a temporary community. And that, of course, brings up reactions. And then you notice that not everybody around you is enlightened.

And that's a surprise. They all looked so spiritual when they arrived until you met them before breakfast, for example. Now the question is, is it possible to allow the reactions that happen around you, to allow them to be, or does that reaction produce a counter-reaction in you which says, whatever the reaction may be, you should be more conscious, you shouldn't be behaving like that, you should know better, you should be enlightened, in other words.

So when you react to something in someone, it's the, very often, the me wanting to gain strength through it, to defend itself. Maybe it felt hurt in some way, or diminished by something somebody said or did. And then the reaction comes.

Then the me needs to build itself up again. A typical thing is to observe it in discussions with people when you're talking and opinions are put forward. Mental positions, in other words.

And so there's one, you get entrenched in a mental position, which is what an opinion is, when your sense of self is invested in the opinion, which is mostly the case. So you're entrenched in a mental position and then you're sitting at a dinner table and somebody across is entrenched in another mental position, the opposite of yours. You express yours, and then he or she expresses their mental position.

And maybe in, and suddenly your mental position becomes shaky, which is your sense of self. Somebody dares questioning my mental position, but really me, it's an attack on me because I've identified with my mental position. That's already the mechanics of unconsciousness.

And then I need to defend myself. And then an emotion comes up with that. Let me tell you why you are wrong.

Really, at that moment, you've lost all interest in what's right or wrong. Unconsciously, your main interest is to repair or strengthen yourself, your sense of self, because it was identified with a mental position which has been questioned or in some way diminished. And that's one of the most deeply rooted forms of unconsciousness, the repair job on one's sense of self very quickly.

And it gets damaged very easily. Many situations are intrinsically, all situations are intrinsically simple because intrinsically there's only whatever is happening at this moment. But self comes in and then a simple situation becomes drama.

So you can watch when your sense of self feels diminished in some way. It's the artificially made sense of self, the mentally derived sense of self. Then either you can go into the unconscious repair job, which is the reaction to reestablish my sense of self, or, and this sounds the opposite of what the mind, the egoic mind will tell you is the right thing to do, and what's something that sounds almost perverse, but this is where you find true power, is not to go ahead with the repair job, to allow through some situation, just as an experiment, to allow the diminishment of that sense of me or self instead of building it up again through the reaction.

And it's the most simplest of situations it happens. An example, a few examples just to show what I'm talking about from recent days. Steve told me when he arrived here, he was taken to a room.

He unpacked his things and sat in meditation, and then the man who had taken him there came back and said, I'm sorry, Senor, I've taken you to the wrong room. You have to move to a tent. Potentially, it's a situation, it seems it's totally insignificant, but if that potentially is already a diminishment of me, you mean I have just unpacked and you are taking me?

Fortunately, Steve didn't do it. He allowed it to be. And said, okay, pack things again.

Very simple. It takes five minutes. Okay, where's the tent?

Go to the tent. But it could have been a little drama, your first drama. You just arrived at Pura Vida, and you already had, potentially, you could have had your first drama.

And not because of anything in the situation, but it was bound up with a sense of me, which is, how dare you do this to me? This is my place now. I've been here for five minutes.

And they're all intrinsically simple. And if you can, let me give you another fun example. And I'm giving simple examples because it operates on all levels.

On the most simple levels, the me gets damaged and does its repair job. Or on bigger levels. We may come to that.

And one of my talks, not here, somewhere else, I was told afterwards, there was one seat left in the front row, and a woman was walking towards that seat. And she was two steps away from the seat. And suddenly, from behind, a jacket came flying across.

And it landed on the seat. And a voice from behind triumphantly exclaimed, That seat is

taken. And of course, a relatively simple situation.

Funny, perhaps. But again, potential for human drama. Potential for a fight over a chair.

And it could have taken a long... It could have taken quite a time to enact the drama. What do you mean, taken?

I was close. It's my chair. No, it's not.

My jacket is there. But you didn't put it there personally. It doesn't matter.

But it's not really about the chair. It's about a sense of self that feels diminished because I'm walking to it. I feel less now that I can't sit in there.

I am diminished in my sense of self in a small way. And that's how the reaction arises. And the reaction very often is out of proportion to the actual significance of the situation or the event.

Similar case in traffic. Somebody shouts at you and tells you, you're stupid, you should... where did you get your license?

And immediately, if somebody says, you are stupid or whatever they say, a repair job is immediately needed because it injures the sense of me. Perhaps you know, if you were very alert, you would know that simply this person is a driving pain body. And every minute he shouts at somebody, you are stupid.

So there's nothing personal in it. But there is an immediate instinctive reaction and the repair job that unconsciously has to be done on the me is to shout something back because that's the repair job. Because then, no, I'm stupid, you are the whatever.

And then he has to do a further repair job and that can even lead to physical violence as often reported in the papers when people drive. We are connected to the totality. So it's, this is a very deeply rooted, people have been doing spiritual work for 20 and 30 years, don't catch that in themselves when it happens.

So the secret, and it sounds almost anti-natural, unnatural, to allow, and you start to do it in simple situations. What feels like I'm less now because of this little event or big event, I feel less, I feel diminished in my sense of self. And instead of immediately building up a sense of self again through reactivity in one form or another to allow the diminishment.

That's another way of saying it's, there's a spaciousness instead of further content fighting that content. It could be a simple thing. You've put forward an opinion, somebody else put forward their opinion, you feel, oh, they may even be right.

And to then, to watch that mechanism of wanting to, the impulse to counter argue and

simply watch that impulse. It doesn't have to become words. So in other words, bring the spaciousness to it.

And then perhaps the words might come, I don't know, maybe, because that may be the truth at that moment. Perhaps you feel a little bit uncertain about the opinion that you just expressed with such conviction. And then somebody presents a very convincing counter argument.

But whatever it may be, all that opinions is one area where this happens. Or it could be all kinds of events taking place where the me needs to reassert itself. And that's particularly useful in living with people because those situations arise frequently.

And we are here precisely to go beyond that limited sense of me that needs defense mechanisms, that needs to be on the defensive and really is on the defensive all the time. That's why A Course in Miracles beautifully puts it, whenever you become defensive about anything, it says, know that you have identified yourself with an illusion. And the illusion is the illusory sense of self.

Because your true being doesn't need a defense mechanism. So at first it looks like weakness when you don't do the repair job. When you allow the diminishment of your sense of self.

Perhaps watch the impulse to repair it and let it pass. That takes you beyond that sense of self. And there's enormous strength underneath that.

But to that sense of self, you have adopted the narrow position of weakness. This is the same truth that in symbolic language, Jesus talked about when he says, turn the other cheek. It's not a literal statement.

It's the state of non-reactivity. So before you live in that state of non-reactivity, which is you've gone beyond the me needing its defense mechanisms and continuous repair jobs. For a while, perhaps you observe the deep seated impulse to repair your sense of self and let it pass.

And you haven't died. I have a half brother who is 20 years younger than me. And so when he grew up, although we weren't living in the same place, I would see him often or occasionally.

And I could see the ego growing when he was 15, 16. And I observed something, an ego characteristic, particularly strongly in him, which was the inability ever to admit that he didn't know something, which is also to bound up with a growing sense of me, that me, I know. We've been talking about knowing and not knowing.

Again, the need, the me needs to, I know. It's dreadful for the sense of me to say, I don't know. Of course, that's where we are going.

And so I observed whenever anybody asked something, he couldn't say, and if he knew nothing about it, he would invent the most absurd explanation just to give an answer to say, I know. And one day I suggested to him, I said, do you want to try a little experiment? When somebody asks you something and you're not really sure, try saying, I don't know, and see what happens.

And he looked at me and, what's he talking about? And I said, I'll remind you when it happens. I'll raise my finger.

And the situation came a day later and he was just about going into some fantasy explanation about something. And he said, okay, I don't know. And I waited a moment and then said, you're still alive?

You haven't died? Because to the ego, it's a little death to say, I don't know. Another beautiful illustration of that non-reactivity, a story I've told a few times, some of you may know it.

The Zen master who had quite a high reputation in Japan, lived in a town. One day was accused by a 16 year old girl who gave birth to a baby of being the father of her baby. She told her parents when they asked her, who is the father?

And finally she said, it's the Zen master next door. So the parents ran to the Zen master shouting and saying, she just told us that what you did, you are the father. And they told everybody in the town and they brought him the baby and said, we don't want this baby, it's yours.

You look after the baby. So when they first, they came to him and told him, you are the father, she just told us. And all he said, he listened and all he said was, is that so?

Yes, and here's the baby, you look after the baby. Oh, is that so? He lost his reputation.

They all, because he didn't defend himself and there was, you know what gossip is in the town. He did it, if he weren't the father, he wouldn't have accepted the baby. That's obvious, isn't it?

The people said, yeah, of course, he must be the father. So he must be a fraud all along and we've been going to him for years. Stories, stories, talk, talk.

And in the meantime, he looked after the baby. Every day he would feed the baby and nobody came to him for teaching anymore. It didn't matter because his sense of self wasn't in any external content.

It was not bound up with content, his position, his mental image of who he was or other people mental images of who he was. His sense of self was derived from the power of this moment, the aliveness, the simplicity of there is no problem. He has a beautiful little

baby and I'm feeding a beautiful little baby.

Where's the problem? And so for a year, he had no more disciples but a little baby. And after a year, the mother grew a bit, became more mature and saw what she had done and she confessed to her parents that he was not the father, but the boy next door.

And so the parents came running to the Zen master again and said, oh, we're just terribly sorry. She just confessed to us that you are not the father. So we now realize that you're not the father and she said, oh, is that so?

Yes, can you forgive us? Can you forgive us? He didn't even know what they were talking about.

Forgive? What for? If there's something to forgive must mean there was a big resentment beforehand but there hadn't been any so there was nothing to forgive.

And so both when they accused him and when they took back that and realized the words used is that so, those words point to the spaciousness in which everything is allowed to happen. Rather than being caught in the event and the content, he was, he is the spaciousness. So the words is that so are just symbolic.

They point to the sowness, the isness, the suchness, which is accepted, which is when it is accepted, then you are the spaciousness rather than getting caught up in what happens in it. And then the parents said, okay, now can we have our baby back? Okay.

And he said, yes, here it is. And that baby had a good start in life. And again, there was no clinging to it.

Oh no, this is my baby. What do you mean have it back? I've been looking after this baby for one year.

I've had all the difficult times and now you want the baby? Okay. You can see the, in the, I have had all the difficult, I have done, I have been feeding it, I've been cleaning, I have been, and now you, I.

So that's good to witness in oneself. And when you, you will be amazed what strength there is when you relinquish the impulse to repair your sense of self. Even in small situations, in a little way, you become nobody through that.

You become as nothing. Now, sometimes life does something to demolish the sense of self in a bigger way. Even, let's say, and even a relatively minor illness begins to demolish once the sense of self importance of me.

The most self important little me becomes reduced to a little worm just by two days of acute diarrhea. And you have to crawl to the toilet every 20 minutes. And so something, it's hard to sustain illness, to sustain a me in a situation like that.

And that's only a minor thing. So for quite a few people, illness is a great teacher, potentially may not always be accepted as a teacher. There's the potential for the demolishing of one's sense of self importance of me.

What comes then is a humility, which simply means egolessness. Because there are certain illnesses which are prolonged, in which it's hard for the sense of self importance to survive an acute condition like that. Sometimes it does, in quite a few cases it does.

And the very potential for this situation to become a teaching or a teacher is transformed into its opposite. It can enhance the sense of me also when it is resisted continuously and you become bitter and angry about what life has done to you. Then that condition, which is potentially liberating becomes the opposite and you form an even more encapsulated and deeply entrenched me than before because you become bitter and angry about how miserable you and your life are.

And you become angry at the whole world and God or whatever. So the two are possible. Potentially it's the teacher or it could become the opposite and be turned into an even stronger sense of self, a predominantly miserable, very unhappy, deeply unhappy me.

With every illness, whatever kind, the potential is there for eroding the sense of self. And I have met some people who have grown through, grown rather, diminished rather than grown, grown in consciousness through an illness that became their main teacher. And sometimes I watch people without even talking to them and I see what already, the transformation that they have already undergone.

I saw last year somebody, I was sitting in a cafe somebody came, wanted to come through the door in a wheelchair and somebody opened the door and the man came, a relatively young man in a wheelchair, perhaps AIDS or whatever condition. And I looked into his eyes and they were bright and luminous. There was no unhappy me.

And that's all I needed to see, to know that it had worked. The future didn't really matter anymore. Is he going to survive?

He's made it already. The flowering of consciousness has already happened. Sometimes then healing of the physical also happens.

At other times it may not happen. Miracles do happen very often when that opening occurs, but they're not expected. They may happen.

It no longer matters. You don't need the miracle, but when you don't need it, it often happens. But it no longer matters.

Similar situation. How a severe illness can demolish the self, the sense of self. When I was at university, I had lunch always in the same hall and there would always be a man sitting at a table next by and they would wheel him in in a wheelchair.

He was always accompanied by four or five people and they wheeled him in and I observed him a few times and he had a very severe physical condition with gradual paralysis of all parts of the body except the mind. And he already even had no control over his head and his head was always slumped down. And he had to be fed by one of the people surrounding him and half the food would always fall out of his mouth so another person had to hold a serviette.

And everybody knew him. And when I first arrived, I asked, who is he? And they said, he's a professor of physics.

And then he wasn't that well known outside the circles of that university. So I observed him very often and thought how can this amazing life inflicting such almost unbearable illness on a person? It's so dreadful.

And he couldn't speak anymore. He could only produce croaking sounds which one person was able to interpret. Nobody else could.

And one day I opened, I was coming into the building and he was just coming in in his wheelchair and I opened the door for him and I looked into his eyes and he looked into mine and also there I saw the absence of suffering when I looked into his eyes and I was amazed. I said, he's not suffering. There was simply clarity.

Clear. And then I realized that he had surrendered. Perhaps not 100%, but there was already deep surrender.

And so I would see him every day and then for many years, I finally abandoned academic world completely. And he stayed. And many years later, he had become world famous.

And many years later, I saw his picture on the cover of Time or Newsweek magazine and it said, Master of the Universe. So his thinking became very creative. He did a lot of thinking, but he had, there was an absence of a sense of self.

So the thinking that he did was not self-seeking thinking. It was simply, there was lots of insights because there was surrender. So it was inspired.

So they now regard him as the world's greatest physicist. So you can, and at that time when I was inquiring about his condition, they said that was 20 years ago or so. He's been given two years to live.

So miracles do happen. Later, many years later, I also came across a little biography of his in which was quoted something from an interview he gave. Stephen Hawkins, his name.

He gave an interview and I remember the line he told when he talked about his life. He said, could anybody wish for more? So that's how, when it's anything that's accepted

deeply, anything, any condition, and especially if it seems at first sight unacceptable, the more unacceptable and it's accepted, the deeper it takes you.

And what could be more unacceptable than that? So it is amazing, isn't it, that there's a connection between that to be inflicted by life with a dreadful illness, that there's a connection between that and the chair and the person throwing the jacket on a chair and saying, that's mine, that's taken, it's not yours. There are two ways.

There's one seemingly tiniest insignificant way and the other a huge one that life has of demolishing the sense of self. Or again, do you remember driving in the traffic? There's a similar mechanism at work.

So our job then is simply to allow the diminishment of me when it happens in its most insignificant forms, to allow it. If you cannot allow it directly, to observe the impulse not to allow it and let it pass through and then allow. Failing that, you can wake up after the event and see how you just completed your repair job and you triumphantly left the room before the other person could question further and you were right.

You left the room at the moment of establishing your rightness and said, okay, and you slammed the door and then suddenly you say, oh, there it was. The repair job is complete. So it may happen that that impulse is observed after the event and that's fine.

That is often the case that with unconscious patterns that the waking up happens after they've occurred because the impulse was still too powerful to wake up in the middle of it. You became it. And after it subsided, the waking up happens.

Oh, yeah, I did it again. That's all right. At least now you've woken up and you can see it.

There it was. Be watchful there that not a further layer of problem making comes in and then condemn yourself for having done it again. And that also strengthens your sense of me.

You see, again, I have failed. And if you have failed, that can also become a me. I have failed again.

You see, I can't do it. You can't do it. So with any unconscious mechanism, as more consciousness arises, often you will wake up after it's happened and look back on it.

And that's fine. And then you wake up just after it happened. First you wake up maybe 10 minutes or an hour after it happened.

And then you wake up, it's just happened and you say, oh, I did it again. All right. At least you are awake now.

It's enough. All you ever need is to be awake now. There's no need to be awake a minute ago.

And you may wake up in the middle of it. That's possible too. You just, the argument, the heated argument or the self-defense, words are pouring out of your mouth in a stream of mind.

And suddenly there's a witnessing presence. The true witnessing presence, of course, doesn't have a face. But if it had a face, there would be a slight smile on it.

If there's not a slight smile on it, it's already become mind again. That's all that the Buddha image symbolizes is that state of consciousness. And that's why this is the hint of a smile usually on the Buddha's face.

So you wake up in the middle of it. But it may be too late to stop it. The words continue to come out of your mouth because it's pre-programmed.

Nothing you can do about it. Let them come. But now you're no longer completely in them, this witnessing.

So they will lose, finally they exhaust themselves and they go, zoom, zoom, zoom. That's good. And then the next stage, you can actually observe the impulse before it becomes verbalized and translated into action, external action of some kind, whether it's through words or hitting somebody over the head in this case of more acute unconsciousness.

So you observe the impulse. So it's allowed to be and by observing it, you can feel it flushing through. And it's gone.

It passes through when it's observed. And then you are suddenly in no man's land where you're not defending yourself. You're not, you don't need it anymore.

And that's a new dimension. Wow. And it's characterized by a feeling of spaciousness and peace and aliveness.

And that's there because you have allowed the diminishment of me. Without resisting it. So you've gone beyond that limited self.

And the vast power of being, of consciousness, of presence, is there. It's a moment of self-realization, one could say. When the little me has been diminished and it's been accepted, not repaired, and then there's a moment of true realization.

It feels good. And in its extreme form, the image of Jesus on the cross points to that because it's simply an archetype for humanity, for every human's evolutionary path, ultimately. When you look at it at first, you say, how strange.

Why would anybody want to have that as a holy image? If you looked at it from one point of view, it looks absurd or perverse that there's this man being tortured on the cross and people pray to it. There is, however, a truth embedded in that which at the time people were not ready, they would not have been able to understand it, to listen to it in such a

pure, unadulterated form in which the truth is being transmitted here.

So it was encapsulated into a mythical image which is really that state of total diminishment of self, a state that seemingly is a state of complete helplessness from the point of view of me, a state of complete, total surrender and becoming nobody, being, so that's the, it's contained, there's a wisdom contained in that image. It's the death of me, the death of the self, of becoming nobody. Who could be more insignificant than this human nailed on a cross becoming reduced to that?

And then symbolically, the cross also points to the transcendence and to incredible power. Now, that symbol may not work for you anymore. It doesn't, you don't need it as such because, but you know the truth directly, but it's a beautiful symbol and it's really, it's about every human, every human's evolutionary path.

You are that. So, it has also worked in some way for certain people who were living in that cultural environment. to simply say, I don't, I suffer with Christ, to say I suffer, it's not, I submit to this because I'm crucified together with Christ.

Anything that takes you to surrender works, it doesn't matter. And, you can also observe and interact living at close quarters with people. You may be able to observe the need for self-assertion simply through words coming out of your mouth and the energy field with which the words come out of your mouth.

Without the spaciousness, you're completely in the mind stream when you're discussing, it may not even be a discussion, it's just, without, without the underlying stillness or spaciousness, just completely in the stream of mind. You remember we talked about the standing back after a sentence, after you've uttered, made a statement, to come to an end of the mind stream, step back into stillness for a few seconds so that you don't get caught in the stream of mind. And sometimes you may catch yourself, it's like the river, yes, many of you were on the fast flowing river yesterday, stream, and once you're in it, how do you get out?

You're in this, the current is pulling you along and the mind is even more, the current is even stronger than the strongest river current and you're in it and suddenly you watch, wow, you watch mind, that's enough, you just watch, that means the spaciousness is coming in through the watching. This is such wonderful work, or work isn't the right word, of course, and that no man's land that you go into, when the diminishment of self is allowed, that's presence, that's the I am that is underneath, I am this, I am that, I am this, I am that, a deeper sense of I am-ness. But you can't grasp it, it's not, you can't hold it, it's not an object in consciousness, everything else is an object in consciousness, little me, that's the one thing that is no thing, the one thing that is not an object in consciousness, but consciousness itself, the one thing or no thing that matters.

Let's listen to a little song, if Kim has it. Yes. Try track three, if I remember correctly.

Okay.

[Speaker 2] (4:17:38 - 4:21:01)

In the heart of everything that I see Behind the eyes Beyond the skies Reflecting me It's not a call Yet before a horror phenomenon begins Oh, I never end I never really end Many differences Separate us on the surface yet But I cannot find A boundary In a conscious head When you ask me Where does awareness begin and does it end I have to say Always been Within the body Without the body I'm subject to Changing moods States of health Points of view Without means Before the deeds and the monuments of man Oh, I never end Many differences Separate us on the surface yet But I cannot find A boundary In a conscious head When you ask me Where does awareness begin and does it end I have to say Always been It's not a call Yet before a horror phenomenon begins Oh, I never end Never really Oh, I never end

[Speaker 1] (4:24:00 - 6:55:28)

We talked about this morning not to resist when one's sense of self feels diminished by some event or what somebody says to observe that feeling of becoming less perhaps observe the reaction against that feeling of now being less and it could be a simple thing as simple a thing as somebody shouting at you in the traffic saying you're stupid it's the simplest of situations but the same mechanics operate on all levels not to resist that feeling of now being less if that's not possible to observe the reaction against that it might arise so quickly that there's nothing you can do about it just observe that and then the reaction is designed to reinstall that lost self a small aspect of self that's been taken out grown smaller, diminished what I called earlier the repair job now something to add to this the egoic reaction against a diminished sense of self in some people it is not an outward reaction there are people who seemingly are timid and they don't react on the surface out of fear so it sometimes looks as if they had reached that stage where they don't need to react to build up that diminished sense of self whereas in fact the reaction is turned inward and there is an even tighter egoic contraction connected with fear the little me gets even bigger although it looks very small and meek if out of fear I do not react I feel diminished in my sense of self but because of fear there's no reaction and fear is the contraction it is a more something tightens within and what looks like or perhaps on the surface somebody who has transcended sense of self may not be the case but has a very strong egoic image of a fearful little me just as strong an ego as the big one just turned inward question may arise whether it's possible to go from that contracted egoic little me self whether a transition is possible immediately from there to allowing it may be possible if sufficient presence arises for that egoic self contraction fearful self contraction to be recognized by being recognized anything that you see and accept fully will change but to see and accept it fully that's the quickest way that virtually requires no time alternatively you can have a transitional period in which you express and openly do the repair jobs by shouting back or whatever it may be and

observe that and then transcend that but any sufficient presence anything that is even the fearful self contraction it can be watched so there's never what I've been describing this morning there's no fear if fear is present that's of course not it that's still ego and the wonderful thing is how rapidly you transcend fear through you're driving a big bully in a truck shout something at you and I'm choosing the simplest of situations it operates on all levels all that's happening there's sounds coming out of his mouth there's sounds coming out of his mouth that's alright and then perhaps if the sounds are decoded by the mind then the mind says oh he's talking about me and what that means he's talking about me is the mental image of me he's like taking a hammer and chipping away at the mental image of me as the intelligent and clever one and he's calling me stupid so it's that inner alertness this is why it's so helpful to be sitting here because here the alertness rises the level of alertness of presence rises and that will help you when this alertness is both within and without and next time somebody shouts just and he might think you're deaf or something and he'll shout even louder that means more sounds coming out of his mouth I assume you're not forgetting to walk around in a state of listening attention around all this beauty that alert openness and to be aware of what arises the beauty that arises in it and aware of the alert openness itself underneath so to speak awareness being aware of itself that is the field of peace I've said it before just remind us if you are only aware of what arises and that is one level of being present is to be present completely then you might feel sorry in a few days time when the beauty all that beauty isn't there anymore and you just have buildings or freeways and there might be a sense of loss but not if you discover the essence of all existence as the underlying field of awareness itself which is just as beautiful and peaceful and still in the middle of a freeway in LA or wherever the same beauty unmanifested is there and here this beauty manifested and then even the freeway has its beauty let's look at some questions thank you so much for all your letters wonderful to read them here is a short big one is there free will do we have free will first there is the illusion of free will that everybody is in they are acting out their conditioning egoic conditioning pain body all the deep seated human conditioning including all the reactive patterns we've been talking about including the one we talked about this morning the defensiveness of one's sense of self all the goals associated with the ego need to be more fully itself to be bigger to be more secure to be somebody to become somebody to combat the egoic sense of self to combat its deep seated insecurity and fear and so that all those seemingly leads to many actions and decisions arising and they all think that's me acting that is what I want pursue this pursue that or afraid of this afraid of that going into relationships acting out deep seated egoic patterns in relationships and then one ends another one starts the same patterns being reenacted again pain bodies and obviously they all think I choose I choose the partner I choose and there is no choice there is only mechanicalness like a script one has memorized and forgotten that it's a script and you're forced to act it out and it's a human script there's not even anything personal in it it's a script of the conditioned human consciousness the conditioned human mind and obviously there's no free will there there's only the illusion of free will and then all that in all that suffering grows

suffering there's more and more suffering generated by the illusion of free will and the actions arising out of the illusion of the egoic me and then suffering reaches a certain intensity and then there's a beginning of an awakening of what goes on inside me all the conditioning some presence arises through the suffering the beginning of an awakening and the first signs of a witness a witnessing consciousness appears being aware of your thought patterns being aware of pain body rather than being it knowing it watching it and so one could say this is the beginning of freedom coming in and then presence grows and all the conditioned me entity begins to dissolve transmuted not really dying nothing really dies the form of the me dissolves all the energy the life energy trapped in egoic forms and in the pain body becomes transmuted all transmuted into greater presence and then action is possible that is not conditioned it arises out of the unconditioned creativity is possible something new can come into being which before was not possible because you are condemned now something new can come into being that is not conditioned by past a new creation a new thought form can come in love, aliveness, joy arise and you emanate that action can take place that is not to do with your past and now is that free will free will ultimately presupposes that there is such a thing as an autonomous completely independent entity there but what operates there is no autonomous completely independent entity there you are connected with the totality you are simply an expression of the totality of consciousness expressing itself temporarily in that form so you are not really autonomous when you take away the illusion of autonomy then even there one could say it is the realm of freedom but it is not the freedom of the entity it is the freedom of the totality the totality is acting through you you are aligned with a vaster and deeper movement of consciousness in whatever decisions or realizations or causes of actions or whatever speech arises out of that comes out of the totality of being of consciousness so the only free will is the free will of consciousness itself as long as you have a form the form does not have free will neither in the state of unconsciousness nor in the state of realignment with the totality because now the totality moves through you compared to the previous state it is a state of freedom yes and a state of newness but even there to say there is free will would not be quite right because there is only the one acting through you so what is the ultimate answer yes and no let's surround every question and every answer with space spaciousness in other words always stepping back into stillness after hearing of your difficulty of finding a restaurant that was not noisy I decided to eat at a table that observed silence during mealtime eating took on a new dimension I actually tasted my food and used the physical sensation as a means of coming into the now much like any other sense like listening can do that's the first part I'll come to the second in a minute of course that's true any activity can become a vehicle for presence to flow into and eating is interesting at when you observe people eating quite a few people become quite unconscious when they start to eat because it's a primordial activity a very our ancestors eating started a long time ago and it's kind you revert back to a kind of primeval activity and I can often observe people even people who at other times are relatively conscious the moment they put something in their mouth their level of consciousness goes to a

relatively low level and then when that's finished it rises again it's interesting to observe you can first see it in others and then with more alertness perhaps occasionally in yourself so particularly something like that that is often tends to be unconscious can be a good vehicle for presence so the very activity that usually would pull you into unconsciousness can then allow presence to flow into and that would be the same with becoming aware of your breathing which is usually unconscious which is a beautiful vehicle for presence to couple your alertness with the in and outgoing breath so the alertness follows the breath a very ancient meditation the alertness follows the breath so there is the basically you're reducing the manifested world to just the breath and bring attention to that and it subsides and it contains in microcosmic form the whole universe is there because it's the outflow and the in going breath and the outgoing breath the in going is birth maturation maturity and then finally it subsides and becomes the outgoing it's a form every time you breathe out it's a form of letting go it's a form of death it's the cycle comes to it's conclusion of life and there's a beautiful point at the end of each out breath that is very still when you haven't started breathing in yet so there's a great beauty in simply bringing presence to your breath and presence arises through that so bring it to your eating breathing is there of course all the time you're taking in food continuously on that level and it's a half way between voluntary and involuntary functions you couldn't stop your breathing completely you can hold it a little bit breathing eating also you probably you could stop but it's half involuntary similar all kinds of tantric practices to do with bringing presence into sexuality which otherwise would pull you because it's again like eating maybe even earlier even more primordial than eating is the pull towards sexuality and which usually means unconsciousness it's something takes over and you bringing presence into that beautiful meditation to what? to be alert bring the alertness to it so that it's no longer a desire movement reaching it's end needing to get to the final orgasm conclusion so to even it's starting a similar thing to have a sexual feeling arises and simply to watch it it's beautiful in itself it doesn't have to become a desire movement that means you bring presence into it so there isn't the so on all levels everything can become a vehicle but particularly those things that usually would be a pull into unconsciousness pain body also so food don't need to become the first one you become when you bring presence into eating there's a self consciousness sometimes around it there's an image of okay I'm eating now I'm chewing it's not presence yet it's the mind telling you what you're doing but you're maybe some presence is coming in a second but now the mind is telling you okay I'm chewing three four five six seven eight beginning perhaps of presence arising and then suddenly the mind becomes still and the eating is happening and now eating is usually a means to an end that's why it's so unconscious and it becomes that every thing you put into your mouth is sufficient an end in itself eating is no longer than a means to an end sex is no longer a means to an end it is an end and now is not reduced to that perhaps we could add another silent table tonight some more people maybe wanting I've also one request of being having total silence to last two dinners well let's see how it goes put perhaps one or two more silent tables and then those who had silent tables can practice the

beautiful allowing the noise to be there and still have the silence second part of this I thought that it would be wonderful if there would be a restaurant where silence was honored by all patrons it would be an opportunity to not only eat in peace but for the mind to be peaceful as well and even temporarily transcended what do you think of this idea do you have any suggestions on a practical level might you know of anyone who would want to make a financial investment in such a venture why not could be very successful particularly in a big city in New York somewhere downtown it's a silent restaurant so leave your name with Kim and then they can put you in touch if anybody wants to make an investment further advice piece of advice is to get a good chef too but the two together could work oh yes and present waiters and waitresses it give you full attention be wonderful hint of a rainbow over there and There's a question here, which is quite helpful, useful. Many people will have a similar question.

Before the question, just some comments on your work. I find the content of your work reminding me of the work of the following men, Paul Brunton, Vernon Howard, Leonard Jacobson. I've read some Paul Brunton, Leonard Jacobson.

I haven't read Vernon Howard. I've read some Vernon Howard. Vernon Howard is, I like very much, very helpful.

There's a nice little book to add if you have a list of books. I don't know if it's still in print. I saw it some years ago.

Treasury of Positive Answers by Vernon Howard. Just little series of questions and answers. It contains the essence.

I've heard from devotees of the person usually that it is important to spend as much time in the physical presence of a teacher as possible. This would put people who are more limited in their physical or financial abilities at a spiritual disadvantage, it seems. Paul Brunton said, what is important is to be in the physical presence of the teacher at least once, and then it doesn't matter that much.

I could, assuming space, it doesn't matter that much, period. I could, assuming space is available, be at all your extended workshops or retreats, but would be wondering if it were necessary or if it were even being wasteful. But I would still want to be there if it's helpful.

Should one seek, should I seek to be with my spiritual teacher at every reasonable chance, or is there a point of diminishing returns? Good point. Where it is only marginally important or might even be counterproductive in that it serves to strengthen the earnest seeker identity.

In some ways, the question already contains its own answer. It's true that it can happen, that the seeker, me, the seeker, can become an identity, a nice, comfortable identity the

ego likes, and it can, there's an accumulation of spiritual knowledge, perhaps acquired over the years, and I value that and I can discuss all discussions about it and look for new teachers, perhaps, or continue to see my teacher. I did mention the other day that once presence has begun to arise, the process is not reversible.

In that sense, I don't know if it was Paul Brunton, whether he said it, yes, I believe, you only need to be with a teacher once because if the openness is there, then something happens at that one meeting if the openness is there. However, if you can be with a teacher more frequently, that would be helpful. Nowadays, we have the advantage of having tapes also, which has almost been the presence of the teacher.

We have books and videos. Well, I don't have videos yet, but there may be some soon. All these are energy fields.

Even a book that comes from source, that has arisen out of the state of presence, contains the energy field of the source. So all you need to open that and you're in the presence of the teacher, which is ultimately yourself. In the presence of presence, you open the book and presence arises.

You switch on a tape and you might have listened to the tape 10 times already. It's not the point. You just listen and presence arises.

So you have all those things and then occasionally you visit, you spend time with the teacher. Up to a point, it's very helpful. And then there comes a time when the teacher isn't needed anymore.

And that's beautiful too. And it requires wisdom to know when that point has been reached. It's good then to have some intervals in between seeing the teacher again.

And you might feel, okay, presence is already arising continuously. And you may already be becoming a teacher where as presence arises, you cannot not teach presence. So there is not the exclusive form of the teacher there, the exclusive embodiment of presence in that particular form.

Presence arises and already presence emanates, even though it might become obscured in you temporarily. You're already what Causing Miracles calls a teacher of God. The moment that arises, so the form, the physical form is not the exclusive domain of presence, but you may get a boost of presence when you go back to the teacher.

It's helpful. It strengthens. Presence from within is pulled.

Even more presence is pulled out of you, so to speak. It's not literal. Just...

And so to be watchful that an identity doesn't develop out of your teacher or your relationship with a teacher. And a point may come when you realize, or maybe the

teacher will even tell you, I don't need to go anymore. Occasionally people have told me that and it's wonderful.

If it's an illusion, it's wonderful too. They'll know it soon enough. I don't need to see you anymore.

Somebody came, what was it? All the way from England to Vancouver and he came to me during the first session and said, I'm going home now. I don't need to see you anymore.

And she says, this is wonderful. I haven't heard from him, so it's good. So the most wonderful thing for a teacher is when they tell him or her, I don't need you anymore.

This is, it's working. And until that happens, use that wonderful opportunity to be with the teacher. In whatever form, the book, the tapes, even I was, some people have a photo of this form.

And at first I said, when they asked me for a photo, why do you want a photo of me? Doesn't make what for? And they said, because I just need to look for your photo and I feel presence arising.

Okay, if it works in that way, I reluctantly agreed. Then you can have a photo, as long as you know this is not the photo of a physical person. That would be an attachment to an outer form.

But if by looking at the photo, you enter the state of presence and you put the photo aside, presence is back. Then it works. So the photo would simply be the photo of a state of consciousness, so to speak.

And even one would say, how can it be that a photo is a piece of paper? Well, even a piece of paper is a field of vibrating energy on an atomic sense, up atomic level. It's an energy field, even a piece of paper.

So even a photo can be helpful as long as it doesn't become a form identity. That is, there's the form of an attachment to the form. Takes you beyond form.

And some beautiful, one or two beautiful photos of Ramana Maharshi work very well in that way. Also, so you can have photos of different teachers. So you don't have, because presence doesn't matter through what form it arises.

And perhaps somebody captures you in a moment of great presence, and then you can put your own photo there too. Why not? Yes.

And there's a photo, some photos of Nisargadatta, slightly not as well known as Krishnamurti or Ramana Maharshi of, again, embodying the intensity of presence. He looks like a Zen master with a fierceness. So if you respond to that, then you look into

his eyes, and it puts you in a state of fierce alertness.

And, or Ramana Maharshi is the gentle aspect of presence. Love, gentleness, and yet also intensity. I also have one or two photos of Krishnamurti that is beautiful in their expression of presence.

So all these things are just forms that presence can flow through. It's not just the exclusive form of the teacher. And then everything teaches presence.

Nature teaches presence. So it's everywhere. See when, you will know when you no longer need to see the teacher in person.

You might still enjoy occasionally coming and just enjoy the field of presence. You don't need it anymore. You enjoy it.

It's beautiful. My first part of this letter is a personal request. So I'll get back to you on that.

I notice how many programmed phrases and words are in my vocabulary that don't fit anymore. How I want to express that don't fit anymore, how I want to express myself. Still, they come out of my mouth at times.

10 years ago, I eradicated must, should, and try from my vocabulary by observing the words as I spoke them. Is this possible with so many thousands of mismatching words and phrases, or can you give me some other ways to do this? Of course, it's a sign of presence arising when you become aware of mind patterns and let them come out as words out of your mouth.

And once they are out, you suddenly, immediately as you speak them, you see how limited they are. And they're actually expressing a state of consciousness that you have already gone beyond. Because language arose out of a particular state of consciousness.

So many language structures reflect the egoic state because that's how language and ego developed at the same time, self-reflective consciousness. And so often you become conscious that you say something and say it's not quite right, or it's not right at all, or that's, and words never seem to quite get there to the truth. To some extent, certain expressions will disappear from your vocabulary, that is true, like the shoulds, those mind, because as the mind patterns are recognized, then they dissolve, and then eventually also the expressions associated with the mind patterns no longer come out of your mouth.

Should, as pointed out here, because I should, you should, they should, must, and so on. All patterns to do with complaining in the head. So certain changes do take place in your speech.

And yet language is never totally adequate. Language has its limitations, it's old. Some wisdom is in there too, if you look to a certain origin of certain words, but the whole structure of language is ego-based.

That's why I often say, don't take anything I say too literally, because then you get caught up in the form. All language, especially in spiritual discourse, is only a pointer to the truth, it's not the truth. No statement contains the truth, it points.

The truth is beyond conceptualization and sounds that come out of your mouth. How could sounds that I make express the truth? They're only approximations, they're only pointers.

And religions come out of confusion of mistaking the form, the words, for the truth and attaching yourself to the words. Then instead of being pointers, the words pointing beyond themselves to the truth, the words become a wall, a barrier. That's how it is.

And there comes a belief system and ego identification with the belief system, not realized, it's mistaking form and essence. And then the form, the words obscure the truth. And that can happen even in religious, very often happens in religion, that the very words that originally were designed to point to the truth, to take you to the truth, to point the way, now have become an obstacle to the truth.

This is the case even with a simple thing, when they read a text of great power in a church and they have read it for hundreds of years and they read it, it takes away all their power. All that's left is the words. Look at the flowers of the field, how beautiful they are.

They spin not, they do not, they strive not to make, whatever it is. Whereas he didn't speak like that. There was vitality and aliveness.

It's one of the most powerful statements to look at the flowers. They lived totally in the now, they have no problem. They're not concerned with tomorrow and look how beautiful they are, how beautiful expressions of consciousness they are.

So words can become obstacles. Now, but more importantly even is that all words, not have expectations that you will never, you will always encounter the limitations of words, even if certain expressions in certain words become eliminated from your vocabulary, you're still, words will remain limited. And when words are being spoken, not even to try to capture the truth, be aware of the greater, the vaster field that is free of words, out of which the words come, into which the words return.

There we come back to the spacious field of presence, the stillness around the words. And even as you speak, you sense the underlying stillness. Then the words are no longer that important.

If human interaction and human relationships are confined to words, the exchange of words, which is the case in most relationships, the exchange of words, which is mind, the relationship is impoverished and soon you'll be in trouble and soon you'll find conflict. So always to be aware of the underlying field, stepping back, mindstreams are words uttered inside the head, always coming to the end quickly of a mindstream or if you speak to someone, back into no word so that you don't get caught up in the words. And everybody, the whole civilization is overwhelmed with words.

All relationships are words, words. It's essential in any close relationship, particularly to share silent space, not as necessarily as a formalized ritual, not naturally, organically, to be silent together, not to continuously need to interact on the level of words or mind. And if the dimension of stillness is lost in a relationship, there'll be trouble, conflict.

If the stillness is there, it can contain anything. Two related questions about antidepressants. Please talk about antidepressants.

I take half of the smallest dose of FXO, an antidepressant. I have done without because I have a belief it will keep me from awakening. However, I have greater clarity and seem to hold presence more consistently when I continue with this small amount.

A related question asks, do you think the huge increased consumption of antidepressants in recent years points to the ego's effort to suppress emerging consciousness? Of course, antidepressants are there because the pain gets too much, the pain of living, somehow an escape from the pain, dull the pain in some way. And eventually you have to face the pain and then realize that it's not as big as it seemed.

You've been running away from a monster. And if you really look at the monster, it's not such a big monster anymore. Facing it through presence, allowing that pain, whatever you want to call it, existential pain, the fear associated with it, the heaviness, allowing it to be there.

It may come in waves and then you watch the arising and subsiding of a wave of pain in whatever form. Antidepressants make it harder to be present. If you're on this very small dose, a time will come when you won't need that anymore and it may be very soon.

Some, it is often the pain body that manifests, as I described, the energy field of pain body, some energy field, some pain bodies have the energy field of heaviness, great heaviness to them. And they arise periodically. I had that.

My pain body was predominantly heavy, a weight I couldn't live with, a dull pain, continuous in the background. I might still be on antidepressants if I had taken antidepressants at the time. Somehow I must have allowed the pain to be there without knowing anything about allowing.

With presence growing and accelerating in you, face the pain that arises with that

intense presence. And acceptance. And any state that arises, accept and watch it so that it doesn't turn into a self, an unhappy self.

If you accept and watch, any state arises is just that state now. That field, that energy field, that particular manifestation, that particular content arises. No self in it anymore.

The perpetuation of inner states is through them becoming a self, a me. Then they go on and on. You feed them.

You feed them. And you take time away, just what is now. So that whatever the emotional state is, the feeling state doesn't use your mind because if it uses your mind, you're back in time and you will be in past and future, which are both heavy.

And immediately the me arises out of that. So for that, you need the intensity of presence. Take a picture of an Isagadatta and look at that to get the quality of intensity.

Or the picture of a Zen, a painting of a Zen master, but better a photo of a master. And then see the uncompromising quality of presence. But it allows.

Uncompromising doesn't mean it doesn't allow. Uncompromisingly, it allows. It's uncompromising and allowing.

And anything that's faced will undergo change. We know that from dreams. We've all had dreams, running away from some monster or you're being pursued by some presence, some monster.

And when you finally face it in a dream, it's not that horrible. And often this is the myth. It becomes transformed actually into a benign figure, an ancient myth.

The famous, the dragon turns into something else or the frog turns into something, a prince. But you have to kiss the frog. Look.

Of course, you have to reduce very slowly if you are on entity presence, then careful and very alert and very carefully do it. Check within yourself, see if there's any waiting for the next question or this or that. Or whether there's such intensity of aliveness throughout your entire being that this moment is good enough as it is and more than good enough.

Is there a flight into thought as you sit there, which means into time, which means away from this, away from now, away from the aliveness, the intensity of this moment and the peace of this moment. What is the role of vision in creating a new world? Does vision arise out of presence?

Vision meaning you see something before it has manifested externally. The good thing is that you don't have to create a new world. It creates itself through presence.

So you don't have to do it. There is no, in that sense, it's truer to say there is no free will. You are no more than an opening and the totality, the one consciousness expresses itself through you.

Is that the relief? You don't have to create a new world, but it'll create itself perhaps through you. And through presence, you may suddenly see what's needed.

Insight and realization comes, it's not egoic. There's no struggling and no effort in it. You will always know when there's effort, then there's no alignment with presence.

There's some ego involvement there. I need to get somewhere. I need to create a better world.

And so there'll be struggle. Effort means needing to get to the future. That's effort.

It doesn't mean that there may not be intense energy behind what you do, but it's not the energy of effort. Effort means you're being pulled towards future. But when something, when action arises out of presence, there may be great intensity and passion, you could say, but not the passion that needs you to reach the future.

The doing itself, it's the doing that arises is sufficient unto itself and there's joy, aliveness, and passion in the doing. It doesn't need the goal. Of course, in time, there's time in the phenomenal world, the doing will result in certain forms arising, new forms arise externally.

You don't need any of those for your salvation. You're not looking to the future for salvation. That means there's no effort anymore, but perhaps great intensity and great passion and great aliveness.

That's how the new world creates itself. So you may pursue a goal, but the arriving is not all that important. Not a goal that is going to free you, not a goal that is going to enhance your sense of self or your sense of importance.

Not in that sense. A good sign is when anything that arises out of presence, it means this moment is not a means to an end. The doing is fulfilled and fulfilling in itself, every moment.

You're no longer reducing the now to a means to an end, which is the old consciousness. And then very often you create, because you have a vision of heaven, and in pursuing your vision of heaven, you're creating hell. That's often happened.

There have been many visions of heaven and utopia. And in pursuing that, we need to get there, there. This is the ideal image.

Once we get there, we'll be fine. We'll be free. We will be whatever we will be.

In the meantime, we need to adopt certain means towards getting there. Okay. We need to eliminate all those who don't believe in this goal to start with.

The madness continues. And this works on the smallest levels to observe any kind of doing in your life, movement from here to there, walking from here to there. Is it a means to an end, or is there a sense of completeness in the doing?

And you will notice the qualitative difference is tremendous between any action that's a means to a future end and an action that is not a means, but there's a sense of completeness to it. And yet there may be great energy there. We talked about eating.

Why many people lose consciousness when they eat is it's a means to an end. I need to get this food in through the body. There's no quality, no presence.

Even making a cup of tea or a cup of coffee, is that a means to an end? The tiniest things using them to see if you can be present with what is. It's never, the illusion in the old consciousness is the next moment is more important than this one.

Always, always the next moment is more important than this one. It does not mean that you have to slow down a lot, presence arising. We talked about that film I saw where those beings, everything they do is very slow.

And sometimes when presence arises, at first people try to do everything very carefully. And then there's a little bit of self-consciousness still there. Okay, I'm trying to be present.

And then you see, that's not quite it either. They're simple, reaching for glass. The glass is traveling to your mouth.

It looks like just a normal, just a normal action. And yet it's not a means to an end. And then a sense of presence pervades the entire energy field around you.

So any action that becomes a vehicle for presence, it's a vehicle for presence. And I think that's the beauty of the tea ceremony. As you know, they developed the tea ceremony in Japan originally so that basically means every movement is sufficient unto itself.

You're not moving towards the end result. You're just with what is. And that is the beauty.

It is possible that later it becomes a ritual and no longer works, there's certain deadness after a while that comes into a ritual and they may be performing the ritual, every movement is correct, but the presence is no longer there, that is possible too. But you will know that anybody with the slightest presence can tell the difference between somebody performing something like the tea ceremony or Tai Chi that requires intense presence. And you will know, I haven't learned Tai Chi, but I can watch Tai Chi and I

know whether they're simply going through the movements and it may look fine on the surface, but the field of presence isn't there.

And somebody else going through the same movements and they see it emanates presence. And so that's the beauty of Tai Chi is that no movement is a means, you're not, when the arm moves from here, they're probably masters of Tai Chi here, so what am I talking about? But all I know is presence.

The hand moves from here to here and usually in your mind, you're already there. So the intervening movement or time period is a means to an end because the movement will have completed itself when it reaches there. So you're already mentally there and the hand is lagging behind.

So there's no presence, there's the projection of future that you're trying to get to. And then there's the possibility of moving in a way that at any stage of the movement, there's no movement into the future, there's continuous, you're not trying to get anywhere, just, and there's, that's the quality of presence flowing into it. And you could perform the same movement outwardly correctly, but you would have a mental projection there and the master would be able to tell or anybody, even if they know nothing about Tai Chi, would be able to tell that it doesn't, the emanation of presence isn't there.

But I, my feeling is that, I don't know anything about it, but my feeling is that presence, Tai Chi originated as spontaneous movement, presence expressing itself through a human being, in spontaneous, very slow kind of dance. And no movement was planned before. Nothing is, there's no, it moves with total nowness.

And simply one way in which presence can express itself, it can flow into. And so there was this, perhaps it was an old woman or an old man, or who knows, a young woman or a young man, suddenly moving and the few people around them saw, this is beautiful. What's he doing?

What's she doing? It was totally spontaneous. And then they said, this is so beautiful, we need to learn this.

And then gradually they started to see, okay, now he's lifting his right leg and then he holds it up for five seconds and then it goes down. So you can, you learn it by watching the spontaneity. Of course, now it becomes something learned, but even that can take you into presence.

It's not how it arose originally, my feeling is. And they, so they observed and then it became a technique, so to speak. But even the technique can work.

Although originally it came the other way around. Presence came and then it resulted in the movement. Now you perform the movement and the movement results in presence,

if it works as it's meant to.

So we don't need to create a new world, that's good. Don't need to worry about that. Maybe I'll have one more question.

Thank you for choosing to share, choosing it in quotation marks. Thank you, it's good. Thank you for choosing to share your realization.

As the hole in the flute, is it ever possible for the true spiritual teacher to avoid encapsulation and institutionalization by the adoring and well-meaning devotees who may be inclined to mistake the teacher's form for the musician itself? Very good. To avoid encapsulation and institutionalization.

Well, I don't know. Institutionalization is not anything that I can see happening here. There's very little structure, which has its drawbacks also, that emails don't get answered for several months or more.

But there's no institution. Things would work more efficiently if there were some institution, but that in itself can become heavy and self-serving. Encapsulation, the numbers of people increase, then the teacher is faced with the limitations of form.

Every teacher will be faced with the limitations of form as the numbers increase, and that can't be helped. I can't answer my phone calls anymore. I would be spending 20 hours a day on the telephone.

So to some extent, there is an encapsulation already happening. It doesn't affect the power of the teaching. It just means to have personal contact with a teacher is more rare, but for the teaching to work, it's not even necessary to have contact on a personal level.

The teaching works, that's the main question. Is it working? Is presence emanating?

That's what the teacher is there for. And you will always discover that certain things in the form that are not perfect, that leave something to be desired, that could be otherwise because there are many ways of doing things. Why doesn't he do it that way?

He could be doing this or that. A greater danger for teachers is something else, and that is to believe that they are special. That's a greater danger for teachers because many people cannot quite see that it's the whole, that's which comes, it's the hole in the flute.

The teacher is the hole in the flute, as it said in that beautiful poem. I quote it, the teacher is not even the flute, just the hole in the flute. So it's mistaking the form of the teacher for the presence that comes through the hole.

And then there may be projections of specialness. This person is very special, but the person is not special. It's through the absence of the person that the whole is there.

If there were not an absence of the person, there wouldn't be the whole. And so therefore, the person isn't special, it's the absence of the person that's special. But many teachers are bombarded with projections of specialness, that the form is special, and after a few years, they come to believe it.

This can more likely happen to teachers who live only surrounded by disciples or devotees in an ashram who don't move any longer in the ordinary world. And so all they ever meet is disciples of, which can be beautiful too, but it's almost, who could withstand this continuous bombardment of specialness? I still do my own shopping at Safeway and other, well, preferably other stores, but occasionally Safeway.

So the greatest danger, institutionalization, of course, is a danger because sometimes institutions become so heavy that they no longer serve as vehicles. But the greatest danger for any teacher is specialness, which is always some form of ego returning. Send me a letter when you see it happening to warn me.

I love hugging people, and anybody who wants hugs, I hope that we will be able to have a hugging session tomorrow. I used to hug people continuously, but with increasing numbers, like the last talk in Vancouver, we had something like 700 people. It was physically impossible after a four-hour session to spend two or three hours hugging everybody.

So these are the limitations of form. I love seeing everybody, being with everybody individually, it's wonderful. But then the teaching is growing, which is also wonderful.

But so then one limits the other in form. Thank you for the flute. I'll start practicing.

It's got holes. That's me. That's you.

Bells are easier to play than flutes. Start with the bell of attention. See, the bell calls you back into the now, if you had left it.

In imagination only, of course, you can't leave it. Make sure you're in the body so that you don't wait for anything. So you feel the alertness pervading your entire energy field and its presence.

The turbulence has passed. The external turbulence that we had during the night and part of the day, that was beautiful too, except for those people whose tent collapsed. And you survived that.

Other turbulences perhaps have passed also. Pain bodies, mental turbulence, mind attacks, discontent, not wanting to be here. Confusion, doubt, trying to figure something out.

Confusion is trying to figure something out. And the moment you stop trying to figure it

out, there's no more confusion. Some years ago, I gave little seminars called Freedom from Time.

And a man came, I may have mentioned the story, who thought that it was about time management. And he wanted to organize his time better. He was a doctor.

He was a doctor, but he got something completely different. And during the break, he came up to me and said how amazed he was. He hadn't come for this.

He had never heard of anything like this. And amazingly, he was open. And he was glad that it wasn't about time management.

In the same way, perhaps you came here because you thought it was a seminar or workshop or retreat about personal growth. Whereas in fact, it's about personal shrinkage. Yes.

So we've been through this weight loss program. And everybody has lost some weight. Some people have lost quite a bit of weight.

Of course, not physical, I'm not concerned with. The weight of the person, the weight of the me, the heaviness of me and my problems, my fears, my desires, my story, my future, my past, me, me. And something else has emerged or is emerging and will continue to emerge.

And that is I. I amness, a deeper sense of presence or beingness. And your identity now is derived from that.

That is who you are, as the song puts it, who you really are, nothing in past or future. That remains as a framework of your external existence, of course. But no more than that, the scaffolding, the framework, that's how you have a certain situation, a certain life situation.

No longer deriving one's sense of self from one's life situation, from one's story. That's losing weight. What remains is the silent part of the teaching, alive stillness, awareness, just this.

And that's the end of all effort and trying. Not the end of action or activity, but the end of effortful action. That brings me to one of the questions that have been asked.

Everywhere I go, I see parts of nature I could not see before, because my eyes can only see one part at a time. But I know there's an oneness and that it is not really divided in different pieces. Is this the same for the past, the now and the future?

And do I divide them because of my poor view, mind into different parts? And if everything already exists, what difference does it make whatever I do? I'm grateful to be here with you.

Thank you. Now, you may have noticed what this is about, not about doing or not doing what we are to do. But access the level of being.

Once you have accessed the level of being or presence, such complex questions don't arise anymore. Because you could spend a long time trying to work out whether anything you do is going to make any difference. It's almost like a koan in Zen, the questions that cannot be answered through discursive thought or thought.

So you torture your mind for days or weeks. And this could be one. If all is one, which is true, the division between past, present and future is a mind-made one, that there is no such thing.

In fact, both past and future are part of now, which is true. Because only the power of now gives them aliveness, past and future. So it's an artificial division.

There's only now that includes the past and the future. And then the mind says, well, then everything already has happened and exists and it's totally timeless. And then nothing I do would make any difference.

Or perhaps it would. And after a long time of thinking, the mind would come to a stop. And then suddenly you find yourself doing something.

Doing arises out of being, out of the state of being. You're no longer questioning whether it makes any difference because you're simply a channel for action that arises. So the beauty about the state of presence is that many very difficult questions don't arise anymore.

Where do I fit into the universe? What is my place in the universe? What is my life purpose?

Even that doesn't arise anymore because the moment presence is accessed, your life purpose is revealed. Not necessarily in form yet, but your life purpose is accessing the level of being, is to become the flowering of consciousness. Whatever form that then takes is secondary or whatever action you take is secondary.

We are not concerned here with what to do, but about being, how to be, rather than what to do. The doing then flows out of the being. Your life purpose is the flowering of consciousness.

It's so to speak, the shell of ego breaks or dissolves depending on your circumstances. In some cases, the shell breaks. It's an almost violent act.

In some cases, it breaks violently from within. In other cases, it breaks violently, so to speak, from without, something cracks the shell of ego. Or in other cases, there is a dissolving of the shell of ego with not so much violence in it.

And that is usually the beauty of a spiritual teaching. Those who don't have access to a spiritual teaching, I didn't, it was all around, but I didn't even know it was there. Well, not all around, perhaps, but it was there.

Those who have no access, usually it is a more violent breaking of the shell. And even some who have access to spiritual teaching, and yet there's a deep-seated egoic sense of self that is not going to give way, even after 20 years of meditation practice. There too, it's possible that something violent will happen to break the shell of me.

And then, I'm using a kind of metaphor, but this is how it is. And then something emerges that has always been there. Out of suffering grows presence, like a flower growing out of the mud.

I believe perhaps the lotus flowers grow in the mud. Really, perhaps they do, I don't know, but some flowers do, they do, yes. And perhaps this is why it's used as a symbol in Buddhism, the lotus flower growing out of the mud.

That's, for everyone here, it's a dissolving, it's not violent, but the crack may already have been administered to the shell, but from now on, it opens more gently. It just may need a little bit of encouragement, a little bit of nourishment, and for that, you have access to books, certain books that contain spiritual power, you have access to tapes, and other things, and teachers, until you don't need them anymore. Everything passes quickly.

We have been here for several days. This is the last day. It is always amazing how fleeting phenomenal existence is.

Not long ago, you walked in here for the first time, and it's gone in a few days. You find yourself in totally different surroundings. Everything fleeting in the phenomenal realm.

If there were not something that is not fleeting, that is not subject to time, you wouldn't even know that everything is fleeting. It's only because there is an essence in you that is not subject to that, that you can know it. The very knowing that everything is fleeting is that which is not fleeting, and that's the essence of your being.

That's the beauty. That is why many years ago, I read it, the sonnets of Shakespeare, most of them are about how quickly beauty and youth fade away. That's all they talk about.

And there is a spiritual quality to them. They don't talk about anything as such spiritual, but every poem is written from the place of the knower that knows that everything is fleeting. So there's a deep sense of peace pervading these poems, which is underneath the words, and the reader doesn't know why, because when you look at the words, they seem to say that, well, you should be crying because youth fades like a rose fades in a couple of days, youth fades just almost as quickly, the beauty.

Everything is consumed by time, so it seems. Isn't that something we should be crying about? And yet, when you read these poems, there's a deep sense of peace because they put you into the position of the knower, or the knowing, which is the timeless presence, the timeless consciousness that watches the phenomenal realm subject to time, nothing lasts.

It grows, it fades, it's gone. So there's something deeply peaceful about the observation of the passing, ephemeral, impermanent nature of all existence. It's not depressing or sad, that's the strange thing.

When you know, because then simply the watching of impermanence, the knowing, the watching of a cycle of growth and decay is beautiful because there you are the knower, the knowing, that which is not subject to birth and death, not content, every content comes and goes. So here, our meetings, our gatherings here, there's the external content. Every day you walked through the beautiful surroundings.

You sat here, there's the room, the view, the voice, the other people you meet here, certain experiences you may have had here in meeting, all that's wonderful, it all passes. In a few years, you may have photo album to look at. That was the retreat in Costa Rica, that was nice.

That his name was so-and-so, and that such-and-such. And it's gone, not much left of that. Even next week, not much left, some memory traces.

On that level, it's a sad story because you have to get back into your ordinary existence. Here you are taken out of that, and although in some ways you sometimes wished you were back in your ordinary existence, especially those people who had to line up for the bathroom, but... Yet there's always something spiritual about traveling because you leave the old structures behind and then you have new stuff, but even that is passing.

Now, it's to allow the passing to happen of all phenomenal existence. Otherwise, you compose country music or something like that, which is all about, it's nice. It says, I'm so sad she left me, it's all gone.

We had such a good thing together. And now it's all gone. That's the level of, you're not the watcher.

You're identified with the phenomenal realm completely and the story of the phenomenal realm. So you are the storyteller. And as the storyteller of the phenomenal realm, every story really has a very sad ending.

A temporary, it may have a temporary happy pseudo ending, but when you really get to the end, they all die. Whatever story you tell in the end, they were buried and they died. So on the level of story, life is not satisfying even if temporarily the story has the appearance of satisfaction.

Isn't it great here? Sometimes experience can temporarily be very fulfilling. I'm having a great time.

I'm having fun. We're all having fun. Let's really get into the experience and there's nothing wrong with that.

And then it passes quickly or it goes on and on and it's no longer fun. The same thing goes on and on, but it's not fun anymore. So you have to look for something else.

When I was learning English a long time ago, somebody said to me, have fun. What's that? And they couldn't explain.

Funny, I understood already, but fun is not funny. Some languages don't have fun. Now there's the pursuit of fun.

I'm not saying this wrong, but then you find you will continuously go through the cycles of, oh yeah, and then dissatisfaction. Where's the next cycle of fun? And then in the pursuit of fun, the dissatisfaction then grows after several years of fun seeking, the dissatisfaction grows more and more because really it means I'm seeking satisfaction through experiences and events and things that happen, the phenomenal realm.

I'm seeking some satisfaction through this, connected with the ego that seeks to feel bigger through it. So really all this is the seeking after experiences or wanting to accumulate experiences. And for a while it works, and you have a bigger and bigger bag of experiences.

And after a while that becomes meaningless because everyone recedes into the past and then the mind tries to hold on or make it incorporated into who I am somehow, but it never really holds together. So on that level, country music level, storytelling, it's fine. It's so I have the blues or whatever it is.

And that's because that's the essence of country. And it's nice because that is when you're attached to the experience phenomenal realm, you always end up with the blues. So, and then you can be the, instead of being the storyteller, you are the knower and you watch the arising and the subsiding of a form, a phenomenal form, an experience, and there's a beauty in that.

The beauty is not that because everything passes in itself, that's not a beauty. The beauty is that you are the knower and there lies the peace that is there when you become fully aware of the impermanent nature of the phenomenal realm. When you know it fully, there's the deepest peace in that knowing.

And you no longer demand then that the phenomenal realm should satisfy you because it never will. And you no longer demand that the phenomenal realm should give you your sense of self. You can try for years and years and lifetimes.

It's frustrating because the phenomenal realm doesn't work on that level. So not demanding satisfaction through events, situations, places, people. I demand that you satisfy me.

I demand that this place should satisfy me or this experience should. It should because I paid money for it or whatever. So it should.

And no place will. No place ultimately can. A temporary good feeling, yes.

And then, oh, there was something not right about it. There was something missing. And the same with persons.

Temporarily it seems, yes, he or she is going to make me happy for the rest of my life. Doesn't work. He won't, she won't.

No matter how many contracts you sign. No place, no situation, no circumstances, no person can satisfy you. So the demand, human existence is so frustrating because a person demands something from the phenomenal realm that it cannot deliver.

Please satisfy me. Tell me who I am. Because everything is gone, gone.

And then some people, you live with a collection of memories in your back of me and my story. And to talk about it as much as possible to keep it going. And so when you look at life on that level only, it's a sad story, very sad.

It's depressing. What a miserable existence, because you are condemned to decay, to die. No matter what effort you make, in the end, it will all come to nothing.

And some philosophers have seen that and they've constructed a wild view out of that and said, it's all completely pointless. And as I believe I even quoted it in the book, some passages in the Old Testament. That I've seen everything that is done under the sun and behold, all is a striving after, all is vanity and a striving after wind.

Vanity there I believe means empty, pointless, meaningless. And then instead of being the storyteller and involved completely identified with the story, you become the knower and you watch and you realize how fleeting everything is, every experience ever. And you continue to watch the arising and subsiding.

As they say in Buddhism, whatever arises passes away and you become the knower of that. Whole solar systems, galaxies, everything comes into being. The galaxies live a little longer than humans, a few billion years longer, and then they dissolve.

And there's that knowing, is consciousness itself, the knower, the watcher. And when you continue to watch, deep peace arises in the face of the fleeting nature of the phenomenal realm and you no longer demand that the phenomenal realm should satisfy you. No, the satisfaction is that peace, that knows, that watches, that allows the fleeting

nature of the world to be there.

And that is the, that's the state of peace, complete inner peace, your home. It is also, I've just given you a different perspective on what before I called the now, because that's inseparable. The now is the one thing that is not subject to birth and death.

And it's you, it's the knower or the knowing. Nothing could be more satisfying than being that. That is satisfaction itself.

And then you continue to be involved in experiences. You meet people, you do things, you even have fun perhaps, but you no longer demand that a situation or person or place should satisfy you. It's allowed in its passing and imperfect nature, it's allowed to be.

And the miracle is that then every situation, every event, every person satisfies you because the demand isn't there anymore. He, the situation, the person, the place is allowed to be as it is. And it's fine, it's more than fine as it is.

You also don't demand any law that it should last because it doesn't. You see, nothing lasts and that also becomes beautiful. So the essence of our being together here lies not in this as an experience to add to your store of experiences.

Then you will feel nostalgic in a few weeks and say, that was nice, but now it's gone. Or the mind projects more future and say, okay, let's book another one. I'm not saying you shouldn't book another one.

But the essence is not the experience of this. The essence is the timeless presence underneath the experience. And that's what you go away with from here.

So you can't lose that. And then you watch the next scenery around you in a couple of days, everything has changed around you. And you watch that, that it's all changed.

And you know that also is going to change. And you begin to enjoy that everything is fleeting even. It's beautiful.

So you may still have fun, but you're not seeking fun anymore. Having fun really means it's nice to enjoy an experience for what it is, knowing it'll pass, but it's beautiful. So you no longer depend on place also, neither circumstances nor place, because otherwise you will say this place is more desirable than the one I'm going to go back to.

And then you already feel the future as impending, almost an impending threat, or you're kind of doomed. You can't get away. You have to move into the future, to this place that's not as good as this one.

And because you're still demanding that a place should fulfill you. It can't, if you came to live here, it wouldn't fulfill you. There would be certain things.

Maybe I should move back to New York. So all this is, whatever I talk about is really always the same, but just a different perspective on it. It's all one.

It's all that transformation of consciousness. That's all it is. That's all I ever talk about.

But sometimes you look at it from here, sometimes from here or here or there. And occasionally it looks as if you were talking about something different, whatever you want to call it. You know it beyond label now, the one central point.

In some Buddhist countries, the Buddhist monks take the extreme measure of periodically visiting graveyards or watching decaying, going to the morgue where corpses are. And they sit there and watch. That's an extreme form of this practice.

You don't need to do that. To some extent, if you visit certain countries where people, old people, sick people, dying people are not hidden from view as they are in the West, you get a much more direct and obvious sense of the fleeting nature of all existence. But living in the Western world where the dying and the old, they're all shut away in buildings.

The illusion can be sustained longer that all is well out there in the phenomenal realm. All is well, but only if you know that which is beyond the phenomenal realm. If you go to some countries, you see that decay all around you, dying people, old people.

That's closer to the truth than the way it looks in the West. So there's always, when a phenomenon subsides, you're coming to the death of an experience. So here we have the impending death of your Pura Vida experience.

It's moving towards its end, death, and it's beautiful. So the rest of today, you watch how this day comes to an end. And you are the watcher.

The sun sets, and you're not so much getting into the story, you just, you watch how it... And tomorrow morning, you watch some new form arising. You may find yourself moving into a plane, and then you sit there, it takes off, and you watch.

With that alertness, that allows this moment to be, and then to pass. But always, it's always, the essence of it remains as the field, the knower, or the knowing, the awareness, whatever label works for you. And then even experiences and places that before were judged as undesirable, you can move into and enjoy.

Often they change if you enjoy them. And you don't live in past and future anymore. You don't need it, not as mental projections.

For practical matters, it's fine, past and future are fine, but not as mental projections of me. Jesus talked about the same things in slightly different words. The whole phenomenal realm he described as where moth and rust consume, and thieves break in

and steal.

In other words, the whole world that is subject to decay and impermanence, where moth and rust consume, the form dissolves. Moth, what they do is they eat clothing. Well, I don't know if they still do with synthetic fibers, but they used to.

And rust, of course, dissolves the hardest of substances, metal. So again, the form, it dissolves form. Moth and rust consume.

The form becomes consumed. He just uses that as an image. And where thieves break in and steal, the loss of whatever kind, like somebody, life, a person, a situation, takes something away from you.

That's the whole phenomenal realm. And if that's where your heart is, I believe he said, then you'll be unhappy, frustrated, miserable, looking for fun, having fun for brief moments, and then being miserable again. And so he said, be only concerned with one thing, the kingdom of heaven, which is now here.

Or sometimes he called it eternal life, eternal life here. Not the life of form. He also calls it abundant life.

Again, it's a reference to the fullness of life that is beyond form. If you could be, if you ever do, or you have done already, sit with a dying person. And death is not a dreadful disaster.

Sometimes people, very often people react to death as if they had never heard that it existed. It's not, somebody, it's not possible. He died.

Nobody ever told me that people die. There's so much repression of the fact of impermanence of form, that when death actually happens in a person's life, it can be a dreadful shock. And so a lot of, in our civilization, death is just as the present moment is continuously denied.

Death is also denied. Don't talk about it. Don't mention, never mentioned the possibility of death.

And there are couples, old couples living together. They've never talked about death. Just, oh no.

And the most beautiful thing would be before your own death comes, which is beautiful, to sit with a dying person and allow the form to pass away and bring that space, that spaciousness, that allowing, and the deep knowing that comes with that, you bring that to that situation. And if you, this should ever, you should ever be in that situation, and many of you will. You may remember this moment, but also not as a memory.

It will certainly be there as in its full aliveness. You are the knower of the passing nature

of all form. And as the body begins to dissolve, that which is beyond form shines through, so to speak, is known as the knowing that is deeper than any form.

So the most sacred thing really is death. When a form dissolves and leaves a hole, just as the hole in the flute, the form was just the illusion that you're not a hole. And then the form goes, and it leaves a hole, and the formless shines through.

So that's why it's sacred. God is present more than when a form is dissolving at that point of transition, God is present. The one life shines through that hole left by the form.

But the beauty here is that we discover, even while we are still in this form, we discover our essential nature as the hole, the opening, and not the solid form. So I may have mentioned already instinctively, deep down, perhaps all humans know that there is something sacred when death happens. But just as they deny death, they deny the sacred in our civilization.

When was the last time that you heard something sacred on television talking about, well, maybe an evangelist shouting, but not the sacred. So in many ancient, in many traditional cultures, when somebody, there's suddenly somebody dies, and they all, they take off their hat, they make the sign of the cross, and they talk in hushed tones, he's dying, he's dying. Why?

Because they feel, maybe yesterday they hated this person, but now he's gone. And there's some knowing that, they don't know why they do that, that when a form dissolves, there's the sacredness which is life, which emanates from the formless one life is present. So, and that applies not just to the body dissolving.

I'm talking about this now, because being the last day, something, this also is a form, a structure, a temporary structure, it's coming to an end, and it's beautiful. All ends are so beautiful, because every end is a little death, and every death is the one eternal life shining through the dissolving form. So we've already embraced death here fully in all its various manifestations.

So the actual death should really not hold any fear for you anymore. When it comes, it'll just be the flowering. The flowering is happening to you already, because you're dying as you sit here, and then a deepening.

One of the beautiful things about last days of retreat is we exchange sacred hugs here. Only those who want it, it's not necessary. And as we hug, there's a moment of no thought, just silent presence.

Not to anymore, because only thought creates the duality. So we'll exchange hugs for a while, and then I'll hug some more people and be hugged by more people in our last session later on. I had to stop hugging people when the groups became so big, the talks with 500, 600, 700 people.

And it's so wonderful to hug everyone, but it became too much after the talks, four hours of talk and then three hours to four hours of hugging. But here it's still possible. Perhaps we could play the sacred Sanskrit, that beautiful song that Patrick Barnard sings in Sanskrit.

Song of the Universal Light. So I have to stand up for this.

[Speaker 2] (6:55:36 - 6:56:55)

I have to stand up for this.

[Speaker 1] (6:56:55 - 7:29:21)

This afternoon, I came to answer lots of questions, but it never happened. Maybe I answered one, if that. But what was said was more important than any answer could have been.

And as it always is, it was right for that moment. So I already sense, as perhaps you do, there's a completeness, completion already about our gathering. And how long we'll be here tonight, I don't know.

Last time I said somewhere, I guess this will be a short meeting, 10 or 15 minutes. And last time I said that, it lasted two and a half hours. I do know there are more questions than can be answered within this time span.

That doesn't matter so much. You may find one of your unanswered questions may suddenly appear in another book. By then, the question probably will have dissolved for you and you won't be interested anymore.

As you know, the essence about us being together is not answering questions, although that happens too. It's not to satisfy the mind, although to a limited extent it happens. To a large extent, the mind remains unsatisfied, of course, here.

Occasionally it gets little bits and pieces. But it's, as I mentioned at the beginning, to the mind, thinking, accumulation of knowledge, to the mind, this is not a satisfying event. And that's fine.

What a beautiful moment. All the people who've been coming here are coming up for hugs and some more people who will be coming up for hugs later, I'm sure. When you come up for hugs, there's no, I don't have any thought in my head about you.

There's only a kind of knowing. If the knowing were translated into words, but it becomes, of course, inadequate if it's translated into words, but I'm going to translate it anyway. The knowing is, each time I look at you into a person's eyes, ah, there I am.

But that knowing doesn't come as words. So there you are, thinly disguised as somebody

else. God in disguise.

Everybody here is thinly disguised. Some forms, some human forms are more heavily disguised, but they're all the same, no matter how heavy the disguise. We may have another turbulent night externally, and it's another opportunity of being the still presence that watches the turbulence.

It'll pass, like everything else, but it's beautiful. I may look at a few questions right now that may not require a lengthy explanation, although you never know. I understand that I don't have free will when my ego is in charge, nor when totality is expressing itself through me.

When I notice that I'm operating egoically, do I then have a choice to continue to let my ego dictate or to choose being in the present instead? I think I have free will in that moment. That's a good observation.

I often put it in that way. I say you can choose to be present. So from one perspective or one level, it appears that at that moment, you have a choice.

You can choose presence rather than mental noise. You can choose to step out of the mental noise, and that is a helpful perspective on it. Ultimately, even that's not entirely true.

Because if presence were not arising at that moment, you wouldn't have a choice. The very fact that you have a choice means there's enough presence. And that comes.

Presence chooses you rather than you choosing presence, one could say. It's still something much vaster than the seemingly autonomous entity. What seems like an autonomous entity is connected to something much vaster.

And something out of the vastness rises at that moment. And from the perspective of the entity, it looks as if at that moment, the entity had a choice. And it's a helpful perspective.

It's quite helpful to see it as I have a choice now. That's how it appears. This is more helpful than to say, there's nothing you can do.

Go and watch TV with a can of beer because there's nothing you can do anyway. And eventually you will get unhappy enough and something will happen. But this was very helpful, this question, the observation of at that moment, because at that moment, something comes in that is not conditioned.

The unconditioned arises. That is the vastness itself far greater than what looks like the entity, but the entity is not separate from that. It is an expression.

So that then expresses itself. And at first, it looks as it becomes like a choice. That's its

first sign.

It appears as if you had a choice at that moment. That's good, good enough. You could ask many questions related to that.

Did you have a choice in coming here? Yes, no. There's something much faster at work that is arising through these forms.

The question about being in the body, having attention in the inner energy field of the body, which is an ancient Buddhist technique practiced, there's a meditation called Vipassana, whereby you put attention into the body systematically. And it's a meditation technique. Some claim that it was originally taught by the Buddha.

And that's, of course, you're present. As soon as you enter the body with your attention, you're present. But the question is, why do you prefer to teach a technique-less, to teach in a technique-less style?

As techniques go, Vipassana is wonderful. It's a wonderful meditation. For some reason, I don't teach techniques.

It seems that the power of the teaching or the power of presence is so strong as to not need the intermediary of a technique. That is perhaps the reason. So it's a direct pointing.

Just as Zen originally arose, totally no technique. And it was defined originally, Zen is direct pointing to the essence. Usually translated as heart, but direct pointing to the essence.

There's always the last step. Eventually, the technique is transcended, no matter how wonderful the technique is. And a technique, the drawback with usually a technique is that it gives you time to become good at it, to get better at it.

And steps, many stages or steps, many techniques have that. So that's the drawback. Even if the technique is designed to take you into the timeless, it might give you time to get there.

Many paradoxes appear when we talk about timeless and time. But that's how it is. A technique doesn't seem to happen here.

There's simply the power of presence. If privately you find a technique helpful, that's fine. Vipassana, whatever.

Some people practice the course in miracles. 365 lessons, one lesson per day. All designed to take you to the realization that there's no time.

That there's only the holy instant, as it's called in the book, only now. And if you could do

one lesson, or even half a lesson fully and totally, you would be there. Even lesson one.

Of course, then you wouldn't need the lesson anymore. And the remaining 364 lessons. Being pure consciousness is so natural and simple, a state, at least I can see that.

Yet, since it is so very abstract too, how can you keep people from straining, mood-making, dividing the mind, creating expectations and beliefs, et cetera, while practicing the simple methods or portals that you offer? This first very important statement in the question, being pure consciousness is so natural and simple a state. It is natural and simple, a state of great simplicity, sometimes called in India, the natural state, your natural state.

And then the question says, yet it is so very abstract. No, it's not abstract. It's simple.

What's abstract is what follows. Dividing the mind, creating expectations, beliefs, mind streams, all that is a waste of abstraction. All of thought is abstraction.

Nevertheless, the question is valid. How do you keep people from straining? Well, I don't try to do that.

So the question is perhaps how do I keep myself from, and even that I wouldn't try to do. Simply watch, when we've been pointing to this, watch the movement of thought as it arises without being it, without being completely identified with it, be present. Do you have a choice?

We come back to the other question. Do you have a choice? Yes and no.

I would say yes, it's more helpful. I wouldn't say this to everybody because many people in this world, there's not yet, presence has not yet emerged to the point where one could say that they have a choice. And to many humans, it still applies what Jesus said.

They know not what they do. They know not what simply means something is operating through them and it's mechanical. They don't, they know not what they do.

They are not conscious. They don't know, forgive them, he said, of course. Somebody points out the psychotherapist that for people who suffer from certain biological illnesses it can be dangerous to go off antidepressants.

So great care needs to be exercised. Thank you, that may be important to mention. Some presence can arise also even when there's medication.

So whatever your situation is now, here you are, presence is arising no matter what. So here we are just alert, still allowing presence to arise and presence is here. And I seem to be saying this at the end of each retreat now and that is you're not really going anywhere from here.

It just appears that you are. You never really go anywhere. The core, the field of now remains.

And around it, the scenery changes. There's the vastness of being and around it the pictures change continuously. So all you have to do is enjoy the scenery and enjoy the changes, the changing scenery.

So all this we already talked about that you can actually enjoy the fact that everything passes. There's a beauty in the coming and going of form. But only if you are the knower of the field that's underneath forms.

Then there's a beauty. There's a beauty in your own body getting old and you can enjoy that. There's a beauty even in loss of whatever kind.

You can enjoy that. So maybe the final message is that you don't have to do anything. In a way, the opposite of doing is what's required, allowing.

The new state of consciousness wants to arise. Presence wants to arise. It's allowing that vaster movement to express itself through you.

So there isn't anything really you have to do. How do you allow that new consciousness, that vaster movement to express itself through you? How can you be that hole in the flute?

What do you have to do to be a hole? Well, Jesus used a strange expression. He says, deny thyself.

People don't understand this. It's being misinterpreted. In other words, be selfless.

Be free of the illusion of the separate little me. Then you realize your essential nature is that hole, your no thingness. And then you're just an instrument of God, you could say.

Just it's expressive. God expresses itself through that hole. God, he, she, it plays.

So beautiful to be nobody, and yet everything. I'll ring the bell three times, reminding you of alertness, of the wakefulness. You want to read a poem?

Okay, after the bells. Would you like to read your poem? The microphone is coming.

Yes?

[Speaker 3] (7:29:33 - 7:31:02)

Actually, this isn't, the poem I'll read now wasn't the one I was originally intending to read. I just wrote this one now, after the meeting. I was up in the brand of the dining hall.

It was so beautiful looking at the valley and the twinkling lights. I called it Pura Vida

Twilight. Below us the valley in twinkling light.

Above us the heavens preparing for night. And here on the sun deck enveloped in peace, soft candle lights play in the tropical breeze. The rainbows have vanished, the wind's gone to sleep.

There's a hush in the air now, a whisper as deep as the shadow of evening that lies on the hills. And rich as a heart's breath that love has made still. This week was a week out of time, and it seems not quite right that it ends like a vanishing dream.

A hundred hearts beating as one, one last time. Then it's back to the cities, pollution and crime. But this hush, but this hush in the heavens has a message for this, for hearts that are open in silence and bliss.

I'm afraid that's when you came in, and the message is each one of us.

[Speaker 1] (7:31:02 - 7:31:04)

It's perfect as it is.

[Speaker 3] (7:31:05 - 7:31:08)

Good, thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[Speaker 1] (7:31:12 - 7:32:29)

I trusted that it would be perfect, and it was. It could have been horrible, but it was perfect. Thank you.

Thank you. Yeah, could we listen to the sacred song again? So we'll just sit for a little while and listen to the beginning of the sacred song.

Patrick Bernard is chanting, singing in Sanskrit. And then at some point I'll get up and like to hug more people. Particularly those with whom I haven't exchanged sacred hugs yet.